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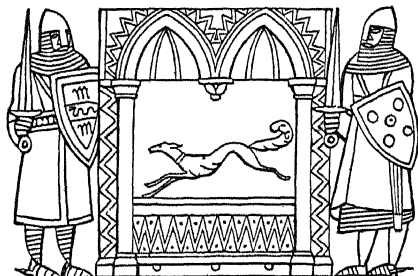
ZEST FOR LIFE

*Recollections of a Philosophic
Traveller*

TRANSLATED FROM THE DANISH BY

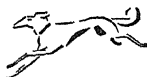
CLAUDE NAPIER

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PART I

GOOD-BYE TO DENMARK

BELGIUM

PARIS

ON THE WAY TO ITALY

EASTER IN NICE

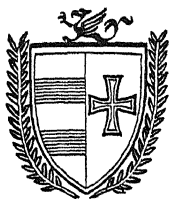
VENICE

ON THE WAY TO EGYPT

CAIRO

PORT SAID

INDIAN OCEAN — SUMATRA



I. *Good-bye to Denmark*

IN one's youth one said good-bye to Denmark, and later, throughout life, again and again one went away from Denmark. One drove, one sailed, one flew — by train and motor-car, in big ships or small yachts: every means of transport served when it was a question of leaving Denmark — and the Danish maidens.

This country is too small; it lacks all perspective and prospect, all the distant and the wild. It is as neat and tidy as an old maid's bedroom. It is so close-combed that soon the last louse will have been nipped and the last flea will have made its death-leap — not to speak of other game. It is as thoroughly docketed and labelled as a mutual insurance company.

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It is necessary to leave it.

And has one ever met a Dane of the younger generation — who was something other and more than his father's son — who did not nourish plans of travel in his heart, who did not with eagerness accept questionable offers from the most unquestionably out-of-the-way corners if only those corners were situated in other continents — preferably as antipodal as possible in relation to Denmark?

From the days of the Cimbri and Regnar, the young Danish men have felt the lust to travel gnawing at their heart-strings as they roamed our placid but peculiarly bountiful and living landscape. In few places in the world can one perceive as in this country that the earth is alive, actually see it raise and lower its softly rounded breast and capture the summer wind in its breathing. The young men who do not apprehend the deep wisdom in the land's long and quiet tempo, who cannot draw breath in time with the sedate rhythm of these latitudes, they must out and away to see and hear and savour, to seek the wisdom of vanished times, the lore of distant lands — well, not always exactly that, perhaps.

But for most men it is not the quest for gold or honour. We are not particularly ambitious, we

GOOD-BYE TO DENMARK

Danes — many would say we are not ambitious enough, and there are few people with so little Jewish blood in their veins. It is with a certain secret shamefacedness that we dance round the golden calf even if we are well versed in the ritual. No, what many of us longed for with the most secret longings of our romantic souls was in truth only the distant and the wild, that which could fill us with the fruitful wonder which makes the soul, as it were, pause and come to rest and precipitate something. We have not, like the Germans, the desire absolutely to understand and analyse the unfamiliar, which with them all too often leads to the worst, the most fundamental misunderstandings. But we dimly perceive that something will germinate later on, for we are an ancient earth-tilling people, and the soil of our soul is still deep and fertile.

We wanted — but this was before the age of jazz and steel furniture, when, as we know, human nature suddenly changed; we only wanted to savour, to accept adventure through all our nerve-fibres, and preferably in secret and without striking an attitude. We wanted to be allowed to enjoy in peace seasick weeks in the tail of a typhoon, to try a sand-storm in Peking, to listen to the tropic rain that falls like lances. We wanted to see the

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desert and the ocean and high volcanoes, to feel the speechless, impotent wonder with which the first sight of the black race fills us — ah, quickly they vanish, both the speechlessness and the impotence — to fall in love with the lovely gold-lacquer glow of the brown skin or with its indescribably delicate sunset yellow which is like the rind of the langsep fruit.

If it comes our way we do not turn aside for a little brisk shooting. We may dive for pearls among the sharks in Torres Strait or hunt orchids on the Upper Amazon, play hide-and-seek with the American revenue cruisers on the twelve-mile limit off Long Island, or drive in dog-sleds round the mouths of the Mackenzie. There have been Danes in the North-West Mounted Police, in the gendarmerie of Siam and in the colonial armies of the Congo and the Dutch Indies. Maybe they are not just the sort of jobs we went out for, but we take them when they offer, and fill them pretty well when we are allowed to do it quietly without unnecessary fuss and without too many spectators.

The most of us turn homeward, even if not all in a purely bodily sense — the graves of Danes are found in every country in the world and at the bottom of every sea, and some have struck root too

GOOD-BYE TO DENMARK

deeply and have since lived a precarious and profoundly divided life with an alien woman on a tropic mountain-side, and have thought more and more as time went on of the corner under the wall in the churchyard of their childhood, where their grandparents lie and the brother who died in infancy, and where recently their father's stone has been put up, and where they feel in their hearts that they belong.

But many do return home, and some with a little gold and a little honour, but seldom more than could as well have been won in the little land.

What then has been their gain?

Perhaps only a deeper, more conscious wonder at the earth's multiplicity and richness, its fantastic and infinitely complex mechanism. None but the wholly superficial becomes sated with looking upon the face of the earth. All who possess but a grain of the mystical union of brain and heart, and a third unknown element which we call soul, will have got as a gift from the world's miracle the abiding wonder that will perpetually ripple like a fountain within him and fill his life with its soothing stir, its quiet twilight music. A note in the soul wherein all the confused voices of the lust to travel and the longing for home have found their final harmony.

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“I saw Thy thrones, O Almighty, and gazed long,” sang the first Danish poet whom the vastness and wealth of nature moved to song. A modern English agnostic says, as a result of his travels, that the other world, that of religion and metaphysics, bores him, since it is a product of our own fancy and therefore shares its narrow limitations; but this world, the incredible and boundless material world, is a work of . . . well, in any event, not of us. He supplies no answer, and the riddle of the world’s genesis, from the edge of which all philosophers and all natural scientists nibble off a little, is still unsolved. Now, as before, it gives our life its inward excitement, its secret magic; we all live in Bluebeard’s castle, whose splendour and magnificence stand open to us except the one shut, mysterious room. Still it is forbidden us to eat of the tree of knowledge; and is not the fairy-tale with which the book of Genesis begins at least as credible as and far more intelligible than any doctrine of evolution? And so infinitely more beautiful in its superb simplicity.

Yes, one says good-bye to Denmark and the Danish maidens; and to the honour of those maidens be it said that they are willing to follow us to the world’s end. “Thy country shall be my country, and thy people shall be my people”; it holds

GOOD-BYE TO DENMARK

good today as in Ruth's time, despite all the strange modern turmoil which is called "the woman movement" — the most unreal indeed of all "movements." It runs counter to quite unalterable physical facts and is therefore doomed by natural law to vanish like a ripple on water without leaving an enduring trace. "I will make him an help meet for him," said the Creator in His wisdom and goodness; so it is still with nine hundred and ninety-nine in a thousand of the dwellers upon earth, and so it will always be.

One says good-bye, and family and friends will as before muster in force at the railway station or on the quay and thence gaze stupidly up at the departing one. No situation is more paralyzing to all mental faculty; indeed, it is a hopeless case. It is impossible in these last minutes to give expression to any of the feelings which are necessarily uppermost at parting, the sense of the uncertainty of life and the profound insecurity in which we live, the doubtfulness of a reunion. One is full to the brim of a suspense which cannot be relaxed; hence the dumbness and the paralysed perception.

On the other hand, how very different it can be to spend some hours at a foreign and unknown railway station waiting for a connexion, whether

by day or night! Then one is in truth alone in the world, and then one can sometimes feel within oneself the harvest of solitude. It teems with fruitfulness. Problems clear up. Fancies flash through the mind like shooting stars.

But everything has an end, even these horrible minutes, and one is free to stand alone at the window and look at the Danish, the Fünen country through which the train rushes, and one sees at one and the same time with the foreigner's coolly interested glance and the enamoured eyes of the native — one sees that it is fair, but so tame.

At a point on the forest verge where the woods run down to the railway line stands, perhaps, a cock pheasant; surprised by the train, it cannot at once make up its mind to flight. One sees sharply for an instant its flaming red cheeks, its wild and watchful eye, and its Asiatic colours — and it is enough to close the magic ring; like a drop scene it has all rolled away and vanished, the forest, the railway, and the fat Fünen country, and there lie the brown long-haired camels patiently under the walls of Peking waiting to go with the great caravan to central Asia, to Samarkand and the Great Khan's court.

So one sails perhaps across the Little Belt on a

GOOD-BYE TO DENMARK

grey day in May, while an orchestra of uniformed functionaries — they turn out to be “The Silver Braid Band” — play national airs. The crossing lasts a bare quarter of an hour, and they play “Slumber sweet in Slesvig’s soil,” while one gazes down at the Belt and remembers a long-vanished summer night when one lay at anchor with *Delia* under Løver Point and white mist-islands peopled Golding Fjord, while the woods of Fænø grew between sky and sea in the stuff which dreams are made of.

“Memory flies like a bird” — yes, they fly, the memories, like flocks of birds, before a Dane from the tropics. There are enough of sparrows that chatter; and magpies cackle and crows screech. But there is also the cooing of doves from the midsummer heart of the woods and cuckoo-calls from far meadows trembling in the heat — and there is a nightingale in the whitethorn that blooms eternally in childhood’s copse.

At Esbjerg one goes aboard, and it is easier there than at other places to say the last farewell to Denmark and Leonora. It is a good place to leave. But the North Sea, grey and restless, tugs again a little at the moorings of the heart. “The German Sea” it is called, but we were among the first to send our fleets over its stern and sombre

ZEST FOR LIFE

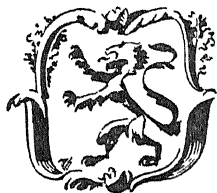
waves. We are entitled to say with the Ancient Mariner:

We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.

And so one departs and gives oneself up to the profound delight. Alone, that is the condition for finding the secret, the hidden fountain that yields so strong and rare a wine. It is indifferent where or how, whether as a deck-passenger or in a luxurious stateroom, whether in the Paris express or on the road to Mount Everest — and it is an open question which of the two enterprises is the more perilous. One must only not consciously seek after anything at all, and then it is as if one's inward eye is opened, as if new senses come into play although one actually neither sees nor hears anything nor speaks to a human being. One arrives at Harwich, asks the barmaid about the Antwerp steamer, drinks a glass of English ale, passes through the customs, goes aboard the *Malines*, gives the porter a shilling, finds one's cabin and turns on the light, sees that one is alone, the berth clean and fresh; and one feels a heavenly inward coolness as in dewy meadows fragrant with new-mown hay under a moon which, naked and near, slips out of the last fold of its veil of mist.

GOOD-BYE TO DENMARK

One undresses as in a trance, puts one's things carefully together and oneself between cool sheets in the narrow bunk, and one hears far off the confused sounds of departure. The bell rings, the engine begins its muffled, rhythmical beat; the ship glides out of the harbour and with a sigh, a shudder, one gives oneself up to the arms of the North Sea, turns out the light, and in the darkness feels unresisting — yes, in ecstasy — their firm and yet gentle cradle, till all is dissolved and sleep comes.



II. *Belgium*

ONE morning I awoke at daybreak and went up on deck. The steamer was gliding slowly up towards Antwerp between the green banks of the Scheldt in a mild, grey, Flemish spring through the low-lying, fertile land.

I drove in an ancient horse-cab up to the Place Verte — the green *place* where hundreds of unemployed were sitting on benches beneath elms and plane trees in full leaf, while the whole market-place was drowned in a surf of white lilac which women were offering for nothing in the sweet, moist air.

In sympathy with the aversion from all work I sat down on a bench and breathed in the fragrance

BELGIUM

of this spring, which here enters into a strange, bland union with the near-by breath of the North Sea. The air grew pure and blue, and the cathedral spire stood up very close over the low houses. *La flèche* the Belgians call it, and it is like an arrow shot against the sky by the Gothic spirit, but checked and made rigid by divine command just at the dizzy instant when it seemed that it would abandon the firm ground and rise free into a more tenuous, more kindred substance — delicate as a bamboo shoot, pearl-grey, slenderer, taller than all earthly things.

Afterwards I saw in the museum all those Rubens, Jordaens, and Teniers that are so earth-bound and robust and so astonishingly well painted, full of consolation for an hour. There is no humbug about those old Flemish painters. They painted what they saw with their earthly, their very earthly eyes, with a coarse-grained power and glow which was doubly welcome after the modern section of the museum, which was, as with us, as everywhere in our time where painting is done according to formulas and shibboleths. A chaos, a quest for — God knows what; most often something which does not seem worth the pains of finding, and a quest which in most instances seems, too, not to be prosecuted with the earnestness, the sin-

BELGIUM

the outer world seen from a new angle of vision, and the artist's task has always been the same: to select and portray. Now too many seek only to portray their own abstractions, and conscious primitiveness is surely the most poverty-stricken and depressing of all. One or two more wars, and there will arise new and genuine primitives who will adorn splendidly the caves and mine-galleries where the few survivors have sought refuge.

But round Meunier's works everything was in blossom under the May showers; in the chalices of the magnolias the drops were glistening with little rainbows in the sun before they fell down like dew on the green lawns. Nature does not grow tired of her "style," of her own opulence; she knows no isms; she repeats herself in works of genius every single day.

By the way, one still sees in Brussels big dogs of indeterminate breed running as draught animals harnessed between the wheels of handcarts, with the same imperturbable patience, the same willingness to the last that horses have. One can find in the eyes of many working beasts a disquieting expression of cool independence, a not entirely un-ironic contemplation of us, their gods.

But how unnatural to see a dog set his paws hard upon the pavement, strain the muscles of his

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shoulders and hind quarters, and come up into the collar! One need not be a comparative zoologist to realize that this creature was not designed for such a use, if there has been any "design" — and has there not?

There are not many horses left in the big towns, and one may well be glad of it. But every day we give ourselves up more and more blindly to the blankest mechanization, we rush more and more feverishly to gain time — for what? If only it led to horses being once more gathered on the infinite grass-clad steppes where they belong, where they were created to live in free, galloping herds with flying manes and tails! But where are such steppes now to be found? Soon the Ford car will have passed over the last steppes on this old earth, and in its trail as in Attila's no grass grows; and freedom, solitude, and happiness will take flight to other globes. Alas, yes, solitude has never stood at a premium, and in our social era is more suspect than ever; and freedom, it seems, we have always misapprehended; it is daily reinterpreted and explained away by the jackals of those in power, and it is amusing that, in this, democracy and autocracy are completely and touchingly of one mind. As for happiness, this is known to thrive everywhere from pole to equator, but I fancy it is be-

BELGIUM

coming a pale and fast-fading hothouse flower under the machine spirit.

Brussels resembles other capitals of medium size; it has its Place Royale, which is veritably kingly. Here the Hôtel de Ville lifts its grey-white spire — *la flèche* again — another Gothic arrow aimed in an ecstasy of humility at heaven. In the middle of the *place* stands an equestrian statue of Godfrey of Bouillon, leader of the first crusade. Both he himself and his horse are so Flemish that one sighs for a couple of Saracens with fluttering burnouses on horses with slender heads and resilient, deer-like legs. One feels that this man had strength and will and faith enough to cut his way through to Jerusalem; he also had humility which made him decline the kingly title; the defender of the Holy Sepulchre, he called himself, nor was there any kinship between him and Jerusalem's ancient princes, David the poet King and the wise man Solomon. It was never a simple matter to be king over Judea or judge in Israel.

I heard High Mass in Ste Gudule, kneeling among the faithful, though myself a Saracen. The choral singing was beautiful, the candles shone, and the incense rose in clouds to the arches, but whither is the spirit flown that created this greatness and mysticism? The priest raised the chalice

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with the wine high over his head, lifted it towards heaven with a movement that held centuries of dignity, humility, and faith, and the congregation sank automatically to their knees when the bell rang, but one saw but little veritable devotion or ecstasy. The Belgian Catholics behave better in church, from our point of view, than the Italians, for whom it is so often frankly pure theatre.

On the whole one will find more seriousness, more participation, more attentiveness during divine service in Protestant than in Catholic churches. The many external agencies of the Catholic church undoubtedly give its services a stamp of theatricality, and are, besides, construed by a great part of the congregation as a sort of permanent film which goes on continuously and to which one comes and goes at pleasure; and in itself this uninterrupted coming and going during the whole performance has a disturbing effect. But what makes the Catholic churches nevertheless in a far higher degree answer their purpose is that they stand open to everyone all day, that anyone at all can go into God's house and perform his devotions in his own way.

Every seeker of the way to God is welcome, and the church wraps its mystic cloak of half-darkness about him, or more often her, and makes it all so

BELGIUM

much easier, more natural than to fall on their knees in their own rooms.

Those who have much frequented Catholic churches, even though not on religious grounds, will also quite certainly have made the observation that in those thousands of lonely ones who in anguish, in despair, in repentance, seek God with hope through one of the sainted dead who stand near His throne, in them may be seen the certain signs of faith and righteousness, of humility and resignation.

Yes, Heaven knows that many a modern soul that has never got beyond a poor flabby agnosticism is capable of longing for the safe age-old harbour of the universal Church, after the stormy crossing of the sea of time where by and by the lights are quenched and the old sea-marks disappear. But how shall one reach that harbour? How is a Northerner of the twentieth century honestly to take aboard and stow away the enormous ballast that the Church carries of dogma, ritual, and legend? Nor does confession come easily or naturally to a Northerner; surely one of the reasons why Freud's doctrines, which indeed rest upon extremely intimate confession, have won so little acceptance in the North.

That two of the most considerable nordic intel-

lects, Sigrid Undset and Chesterton, have been able to make the plunge must have made an immense impression on many; but how was it possible to them? Chesterton's *Orthodoxy*, to which one returns again and again, driven by an inward need and beguiled by the brilliance of his paradoxes, explains nothing. In it, too, there is the sudden leap in thought, that *quia absurdum* which seems inevitable.

If one has looked about one in Europe one must necessarily come to the conclusion that people in the Catholic countries, in spite of poverty, ignorance, and the lack of hygiene and others of the blessings of modern technical progress, seem to live their lives more easily, to be less strained, less nervous — in brief, “happier” — than the Protestant peoples. But is it because they are Catholics, or are they Catholics because they are like that? The old question of *post* or *propter*, which everyone must answer according to his temperament. And there one usually ends; one is what one is by birth and heritage. There are probably still faithful “die-hards” who believe in enlightenment as a dogma and worship the goddess of reason despite that they are always repudiated by the facts. There are born Catholics who have become Protestants or atheists and never reached

home, and the converse. One can be a Catholic without knowing it; and let that be a consolation.

But what a mighty instrument the Gothic cathedrals are to this day for the Mother Church! How, whether one be atheist or Shintoist, Mohammedan or Confucian, one goes exalted and consoled out of these wonderful houses! Their beauty is not of this world; their like is found nowhere upon earth. Of a truth these stones speak; they cry louder than any martyr's blood, even if we no longer fully understand their language. They speak more impressively than the holy Bernard of the things all human beings could understand when they were children. Of a simple faith unto death, of purity undefiled despite the temptations of the world, of the fall and the plunging into the pains of hell, and of the dizzy ascent to felicity in the martyr's heaven.

They sing, these stones, a song of the fertility of the human spirit when faith was young and men lived on the threshold of the marvellous. Then arose great nameless artists who, generation after generation, shaped these miracles of sublimity and mysticism, and who yet had patience and love enough to make each little detail a thing of beauty, from the grace in the smile of the saints to the last chimera on the summits of the towers.



III. *Paris*

For twenty days in May — summer days — I once lived in this blossoming city whose light is vivid and stimulating as alpine sun. Luckily I am not going to describe Paris — a terrifying thought to have to inventory its charm; and it would be impossible to me, for I have seen next to nothing of the things that should be seen by a conscientious Northerner on his first pilgrimage to the city of light. But if I could make it clear to myself what it was that captured me and enrolled me in the endless succession of this city's admirers and slaves, if I could seize and hold fast only for an instant a drop of the fine and fugitive stuff that is its essence, the invisible and untraceable hor-

PARIS

mone in its organism, then I should feel something of the same wild and tempestuous happiness that the youth feels who for the first time has braved his beloved and forced her to her knees.

The misfortune is that all are too unanimous about the matter, all who are once drawn into her enchantment; in all the tongues of the earth people have tried to describe the light intoxication by which one feels oneself seized when, for example, one walks on a morning of dewy sunshine along the "lovely chestnut lane" leading up to the Luxembourg Gardens from the Boulevard du Montparnasse; or sits on a bench in the little space behind Notre Dame and dreams oneself into the chimera's world; or on an afternoon in the Avenue du Bois-de-Boulogne, now called after a General, watches among the nursemaids the children's play that seems freer and more graceful than elsewhere. Only in Rome are the children prettier — and then there are so many more of them.

It lies in the air and the light, in the multitude of living trees and shrubs in the sea of stone; most of all perhaps in the proportions of things. In this city one gets buildings and monuments, trees and human beings at the right distance. Happy relations prevail; wherever one goes one has a free vista. It is all neither too near nor too far; it is

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within range, but it does not obtrude itself. The buildings and monuments have background, have — it seems — air enough about them. One feels that the inanimate things here can breathe freely and naturally. One imagines that even the obelisk on the Place de la Concorde might feel happily at home here, where no one understands the language its sides speak; that it does not miss the Nile and the sunsets of the desert sky and its starry nights.

In these last lovely days of spring when the sun leaps up in splendour and the sky is so happily, so youthfully blue, when it is warm and mild but not yet hot, when the dew lies late into the morning and everything is in full bloom, the chestnuts in a luxuriance as nowhere else, when the air is saturated with the scent of lilac and hawthorn, and the first cherries gleam on the pavement stalls — it is as if the whole city were crooning a tenuous and delicate melody. Smilingly one joins in with it, catches oneself using the word “happy” far too prodigally. One is tempted to believe that here the moments of happiness may be more frequent and last longer than elsewhere, that here the joy and zest of life are strong, the sorrows violent, perhaps, but brief — death swift and easy.

Every morning I walked from my little comfortable hotel on Montparnasse up along the chest-

nut lane under the gentle rain of white blossoms; stopped before Carpeaux's brilliant fountain in Allée de l'Observatoire — the four women holding up the globe. How he and his generation understood and had an eye for the union of strength and sweetness that is the essential charm of the woman's body! These women's nudity is natural, yes, inevitable; on a nearer view one discovers that they are hardly earthly women; they belong to the race of deathless demigoddesses with which the Greeks peopled nature; they belong to the world of the dryads and hamadryads who inhabited an Arcadia of perpetual summer, dancing to the notes of the reed pipe and the one-stringed kithara on a forest-wreathed plain within sight of the wine-dark sea. From these graceful *fausses maigres* the all too human is eliminated; they are children of the baroque without a doubt, of the baroque at which the "connoisseurs" have smiled so long and so superciliously. Nowadays one is certainly in good and numerous company in the view that perhaps there was nothing wrong with Bernini's baroque, except that his graceful and smiling women were draped like saints and misapplied to the tombstones of popes and cardinals instead of to the fountains where they belonged, clad only in the filmy garment of the spray.

The actual female body quite certainly does not lend itself to naturalistic reproduction in art and only very seldom to exhibition in the nude in broad daylight. Michelangelo's *La Notte* in San Lorenzo is the only approach to an exception that I know, but that is a gigantic, a superhuman realism. And Ejnar Nielsen's *Eve*, for example — finely conceived and brilliantly painted; I wonder whether any healthy human being has looked at this picture without a vague feeling of aversion, an impulse to contradiction, to revolt. It is with the female body as with the subconscious, it is still a question whether the analysis ought to be carried so deep that the last veil is rent, the deepest roots laid bare. A naked ballet is a horror, as clearly appears at the Folies Bergère and other places despite the flattering artificial lighting. And think of the atrocities with which the Germans inundated us in their *Nacktkultur* advertisements; there seems to be no limit to their lack of taste. And I know well that it brands a man to say so, but — hand on heart — could not one wish some of our own post-war Abyssinian women and milkmaids clothed?

Up in the garden stand busts of Watteau, Chopin, and Musset; each in his own way has added a new province to the realm of lyrical beauty. They have their own sect, their secret lovers over

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the whole globe, certainly numerous in Denmark although their adherents do not know one another. We have always been stronger in folk-song than in oratorio, we understand better the little melody than the great tragic strain. They it is who have so often started in my mind the fruitful vibrations from which something rich was born, most often, alas, as with all dilettanti, soon to die again because I lack energy to hold it fast — and also the ambition necessary to stimulate the unfortunately very necessary labour. The soil is constantly being manured, but it is never ploughed, and since the seed is brought by every casual wind the crop cannot but be a queer mixture, mostly weeds but “with wild flowers here and there.”

I come out on the great open *place* with the fountain in front of the palace. All its red hawthorns are in full bloom and bleed quietly in the sun. Above them spreads the vaulting of the chestnuts, the cathedral of the trees. Here Bailly stands in bronze and speaks impressively, eagerly, and patriotically. But the young students of both sexes and many races who pass by the place do not listen to his voice on a summer morning like this. They take life lightly as do all the young. It may have been only because there were a number of straight noses, a number of classic profiles, but it struck me

that, regarded as a whole, they seemed to have more poise and gravity, more mental discipline than Danish students. Perhaps it was only that they were still living in the shadow of the war. There were many handsome types among them — and queer ones too. A young girl walked reading intently to and fro in the sun in the big open *place*. Her only visible garment was a piece of flowered silk with one hole for the head and two for the arms. Her legs were bare as far as could be seen, some two thirds of their entire length. Her arms and shoulders were like those of the Amazon in the Vatican. Her hair ash-blond, page-clipped — still a rarity at that time; her face was classical, profoundly serious. She seemed not to be aware that many eyes followed her, many heads were turned. In imperturbable calm and complete absorption in her book she moved her comely legs gravely across the open sun-drenched space, alone as in a desert. When at last slowly and with dignity she mounted the wide steps and disappeared beneath the chestnuts, there were certainly others besides myself who still saw before our inward eye the free grace of her bare legs and the noble curve of her neck under the page's hair, others beside me who felt with a catch at the heart as if youth and beauty untouched had wandered by.

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The goal of my ramble each morning was the Médicis fountain up in the corner by the Odéon. I cannot judge of the artistic merit of this work; I have grown too fond of it. Probably it is not great. But for me who have sat and dreamed — or often only sat — in the shade of its plane trees and joined in the fountain's little contented melody on so many summer mornings in succession, for me it is something of a sanctuary, one of the small altars along my road.

Of course it is the summer's fresh and yet so bland caress, the light that falls through the plane trees' leafy crowns down over the green surface of the basin, as abundantly, as penetratingly, as intimately as the rain of gold descended into Danaë's lap; the moist, green, moss-grown sides of the basin and its cool surface bestrewn with chestnut blossoms — of course it is all this, the scenery more than the monument itself, that creates the strange, tender, almost loving mood of the place.

I do not know at all who is the master who has fashioned the two little naked human figures that lie under the grotto's arch. He sitting, she lying across his lap with an arm yet flung up about his neck. It is the moment after passion has reached its goal and consumed itself. Their limbs are relaxed; they have attained the deepest peace and

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happiness mankind can attain on this earth; it is the brief moment in our life in which we are free, when all bonds are loosed, all heaviness vanished, where we are "afar from the sphere of our sorrow," when we are almost gods. And the spirits and genii of nature seem to understand and admit it; for a moment they accept the two little human beings as their like in kinship with the immortals. The great giant bends observant out over the edge of the grotto and looks down good-naturedly understanding, perhaps a little enviously, at the idyll beneath; he raises his hand warningly as if to adjure all the wild and passionate spirits of the wood to peace. To the left Pan is playing on his flute a melody inaudible to earthly ears and therefore, as we know, sweeter than all heard melodies, while to the right a hamadryad smiles mockingly, half coy, very curious, and hushes the whisper of the leaves, the murmur of the springs, the song of the birds lest they disturb the so brief hour of happiness of the human pair.

The sparrows come and go and bathe in the shallow water on the terrace below the group, and the pigeons, grey-violet, bronze-coloured, of a nobler race. Two of them settle for a moment on the woman's bare, white arm; their small, lively, slender toes clasp the dead stone like fingers of

dextrous dwarfs. They bill and coo, trip cautiously out into the green water, curtsy and kiss their reflections, to disappear a moment after on strong and purposeful wings in the upper world of sun-stripes, deep green shadows, of scent and colour and the fluting of thrushes hidden somewhere between the crests of the planes and the chestnuts.

On the seats round the basin sit as a rule many students ostensibly studying. Not a few young women, too, have settled there assiduously occupied with needlework, necessary repairs to the wardrobe. A young girl in the early twenties came one morning and sat down in the empty seat beside mine. She was plainly dressed, a black skirt and a black jacket, worn a little shiny, which she took off and began to stitch at. I stole a glance and saw with the shock that comes with beauty suddenly revealed that she was pretty. Beauty possesses the faculty of taking effect at a distance, of which even high-tension electricity and love are only capable by direct contact. "Ah, the girl was like a Leyden jar, a voltaic pile, a battery." Yes, she was handsome, of a noble and purely classic beauty. Dark-skinned, with black, close-cropped hair; the face perhaps a little too narrow, but it shone with intelligence and humour; in repose the

expression was serious, but one saw the lines of the smile already traced. The least little thing would be enough to make it leap forth; and the transition from the neck to the rounding of the shoulders was perfect. She had neither the broad boxer's shoulders which seem to be the latest cry in feminine form today, nor the steeply sloping bottle-shoulders beloved by the eighteenth-century miniature-painters. She had quite natural woman's shoulders, slender, seemingly fragile, but with the skeleton well concealed and on closer investigation surprisingly solid and firm. Nothing on earth is lovelier, and the sculptors cannot but dream day and night of the rhythm of those lines. When perfect beauty reveals itself it is unforgettable, it leaves a brand, a stigma on the soul. A single movement can become fixed like marble and secured for eternity in one's consciousness; the last thing one sees when one's eyes grow dim.

Soon afterwards a young student, a handsome lad, came up at full speed and sat down beside her, laid one arm about her neck, lifted her face with the other, and kissed her several times on the mouth with the utmost naturalness. This seemed not to displease her; on the contrary; the smile, the good fairy's christening gift to the human child, leaped forth miraculously on her face, and with a

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happy, ravishing little movement she nestled up against him.

It would have been impossible for me to take my eyes off her, and fortunately they were both wholly submerged in the magic of the moment. She was reminiscent of certain of Luini's women, those mild and stately saints whose grave charm is not entirely freed from the earthly; but all at once I realized that thus must Alcestis have looked as Euripides describes her in that strange comedy which threatens at every moment to become a tragedy. Yes, of course it was she, the young Queen, contented as wife and mother, full of joy in, of zest for, everyday life and the day's work, but of the race of heroes, and willing as a natural, a reasonable, thing to sacrifice herself for her husband, her King, to give all, even her young, happy life.

It was obvious that he was in love; he had constantly to touch her, her little finger, the tips of her ears, but, by all the gods who command happiness on this earth, the lad in that moment possessed it wholly and completely; he held beauty willing and surrendered in his arms; the time was a summer morning and the place the loveliest spot in Paris. Did he understand this, did he feel that this was the "moment," perhaps the greatest and the

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only one of his life? Scarcely, for in youth one believes that such scenes can be indefinitely repeated, that the moment always comes back. But one day when, old and wise, he is speaking of the happiness which is fleeting and difficult for us human beings to capture, then perhaps with a sudden pang that penetrates to the bottom of his being he will remember this May morning and realize that he *has* held happiness between his hands and kissed its mouth and gazed into its smiling eyes, but lacked the strength, the singleness of purpose, and the humility to hold it fast.

After this scene, which was played out with a naturalness and a *sans-gêne* as though they had been alone on the globe, although half a hundred eyes observed them, they both grew serious and discussed with the greatest eagerness some obviously purely practical question, most likely the day's financial worries.

The young man got up and went, and soon after two other students approached with dancing step and open arms. One of them was an almost black Moroccan or other type from the Dark Continent. The white one without hesitation threw his arms around Alcestis' neck, while the Senegalese from the other side pouted his thick Negro lips

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and to my horror tried to approach them to the classic bow of her mouth. All as a quite natural thing — all in the day's work. But with grace and case she eluded them both, while her smile and hands, as it were, begged forgiveness that she could not oblige them just then with what her eyes told them both at once would otherwise have been the dearest wish of her heart.

Alas, no Saint Catherine, no Alcestis ! The myth fell to earth, but the beauty remains, imperishable and undefiled, and it is capable of rising like a lotus pure and virginal through the black and stinking mud and radiantly unfolding itself in the world's sunshine.

I, too, got up and went slowly away. And although what I had seen was but a very everyday scene between a wanton girl and a couple of students, I felt myself moved to the depths, as it were turned to stone after having looked upon the Medusa face of beauty. And with the old sense — so often fought down — of the loneliness of life and *das Unzulängliche*.

How old Shakspeare was when he wrote the little poem that ends:

Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty,
Youth's a stuff will not endure,

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I do not know, but when one is trying to keep away from "the old fools' path," there is a certain consolation to be found in the last line.

I got up and went — but Pan plays eternally upon his flute above that grotto, and nymphs smile and listen and hush the gentle sounds of nature, while youth comes and goes with kisses and smiles and tears; sparrows bathe in the fountain, and doves wheel up to marvellous realms of sun and shade.



IV. *On the Way to Italy*

THE SEASON was over on the Lido. The queer community whose members walk like spectres through all the illustrated society papers had fled before the heat, had followed the complex but inflexible law that governs their blind wanderings. I was therefore almost alone that May day in the through train from Paris to Trieste, and I scanned the northern French landscape in Île de France and Burgundy. We were following the Seine valley (or was it the Marne?) and often crossed the river, which winds more than any other river — many and many a time it is as though it turns right round, definitely abandons the idea, runs in figure-of-eight curves — like many others it is reluctant to leave this fair and fertile land.

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Here are endless green meadows of a luxuriance without equal, where solitary cows are drowned and disappear in the waving sea of grass. The meadows are framed by poplars no less luxuriant whose leaves quiver like new-born butterflies, and their reflections move even more imperceptibly than the fins of hidden shoals of fish deep down in the slowly gliding water.

The land is empty; that is the fact which obtrudes itself. It is miles between the villages, and there are few outlying farms as in the Danish landscape. In more than two thirds of the departments of France the population is now decreasing, and where there is a surplus it is often foreigners who provide it. Some three million Italians live in Provence and Languedoc. What is going to happen in the course of the next generation? Can France defend its depopulated country with black African troops? Inconceivable in the long run. And every year there is a surplus of nearly half a million Italians who no longer can go to America, North or South, and for whom there is no longer room in Italy. There it is that the danger threatens, and one must hope that the natural result — namely, a peaceful colonization of France — can be brought about in co-operation and agreement. The English and the Scandinavians have also spontaneously

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ceased to multiply to any noticeable extent; the Dutch and the Belgians not yet entirely. The Germans are propagating at Hitler's bidding, but it is indeed doubtful if even he can induce the German *Hausfrau* to go on bringing forth five children into an isolated Germany dependent on its own produce. Even the Italians are beginning of late to backslide, despite the united authority of Mussolini and the Pope. The whole thing forms a situation which Europe has not hitherto had to face. Is it a purely economic phenomenon, or is it a throwing-up of the sponge, a pass declaration in the face of life, the mechanized modern life that gives so much and such strident cry and so desperately little wool? If the movement runs its course unchanged — but as to that no one knows anything for certain — then in twenty years Italy will be the only young nation in Europe; she will have twice as big a percentage of her population between the ages of twenty and forty as the rest of Europe proper. We others will be peoples without youth, old and it is to be hoped wise and resigned, for we shall have a hard row to hoe.

For many years the wise (and by that I am not alluding to the statisticians) have said, shaking their heads when the talk turned on the falling birth-rate first and foremost in France and after-

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wards in all countries, that nothing but a new religion, a new Messiah, could alter it. No one can in reality foretell anything about these things. In the last century Europe has trebled her population — an enormous effort. Would it on the face of it be remarkable if the old lady took a breathing-space, perhaps only *reculer pour mieux sauter*? The new religions we have more or less got in some countries, nor can a certain effectiveness in them be disputed; but who really believes in their permanence, and how long at the best will they retain their stimulating power? Let France pass through another revolution that upsets the *rentier* and *dot* ideas, and we shall see her doubling her population in a generation.

The younger Danish women of the self-supporting academic world nowadays declare with one voice that they want nothing so much as to have children — they simply love children. But, be it observed, without giving up their work! In other words, they want to have children in their spare time, an hour or two in the evening. Accordingly we must have day-nurseries for the children and a new career for women, that of “day-mothers” in contradistinction to the actual or evening-and-night mothers. These day-mothers might perhaps fitly be recruited from the new and rapidly grow-

ing class that falls under the heading "acquitted of abortion" or "acquitted of infanticide."

Meanwhile we were rushing southward and eastward through many long tunnels bored through quite low hills. The straight way, the shortest before everything, through mountains or over rivers. The Paris-Orient express has not time to follow the enchanting little rivers through their winding valleys, though that indeed is nature's way and the one which mankind first followed. The water, the running water, knows the easiest way across the hills even if not always the shortest. Now we have grown so much cleverer, if scarcely wiser. Now the important thing is to gain time — for what? Shall we ever grow wise enough again to understand that nothing bestows greater peace than slowly to follow nature's way, that nothing is more fruitful for the mind than to linger by flowing water?

At dinner in the dining-car a young French married couple sat opposite me. She was not more than twenty or twenty-one, small, with an elegant figure; pale, with a suggestion of Basedow's disease. Her mouth was rather large and the lips a little too full, but her profile was otherwise pure and handsome, as so often in the Latin countries. She

was elegantly dressed and was wearing a slender but genuine pearl necklace. Her travelling dress was cut out to a point at the breast, so deeply that one perceived the cleft between the breasts. From the somewhat greater brownness of the skin in that region, taken in conjunction with the rather too heavy neck and the fact that she refused caramel pudding with an involuntary shudder while on the other hand eating quite well of Brie cheese, from these observations I arrived — though at best a Dr. Watson, by no means a Sherlock Holmes — at the diagnosis that she was in the second or third month of pregnancy. Both came into the dining-car wearing gloves, and put them on again immediately after dinner; no cigarettes or liqueurs. An error to their disadvantage in the bill was very seriously taken up and gone into. They were travelling first class, were on a tour to the Italian lakes, and were studying together a map on which the route was marked in blue. Both were very much in love, but well under control. The intelligence was dominant. A handsome and cultivated young French couple on a belated wedding trip.

At the next table sat an American married couple, somewhat older; he a good deal older, she between twenty-five and thirty. She was tall, with a magnificent figure, was wearing a big and cer-

tainly genuine string of pearls; her face regularly handsome, but astonishingly empty, indeed completely blank. Life had not yet succeeded in tracing a single character. She spoke fluent French with a table companion, but with a marked American accent. Every time a remark was made with a suspicion of a reflection or a generalization, anything beyond the most complete banality, her eyes grew big and round and quite comically vacant, and her lips were drawn together almost as if from pain. She and her husband came into the dining-car each with a French novel in hand, and these they read between the courses, which were devoured in great haste and in the most business-like fashion. They did not speak to each other. I caught a glimpse of the title of her book, which was *Le Désir et le péché*. While she was reading, her face had a suffering, strained, but very determined expression. It was obvious that she had firmly resolved to force her way into French culture *à tort et à travers*, to pursue it on foot in all its byways, whatever the consequences. She smoked cigarettes and dutifully drank a glass of Cointreau while she continued her reading.

The young French couple had for some time been observing her with discreet but increasing amusement; suddenly he discovered the title of the

book that was being studied and called his young wife's attention to it, and then for a moment amusement got the better of discretion. Our eyes met in a fleeting glance of understanding.

Soon afterwards the Americans went out, both absorbed in their books. She most likely striving in the honesty of her candid soul to understand a Latin interpretation of such concepts as "carnal desire" and "sin." Concepts which in her Middle Western college and in her whole environment only existed *in vivo* — but simply not as concepts.



V. *Easter in Nice*

Most tropical people — and by this I do not mean Negroes or Malays — seize every chance to revisit the old country, travel frequently to and fro; and one who has lived many years in the tropics, and reckons it out, finds with astonishment that he has spent years of his life aboard ship.

He has become the slave by turns of homesickness and the lust of travel, those two restless sisters who are as like one another as twins. The spot where one was born by the shore of Limfjord and the plain under the shadow of the volcano where one lives one's life are equally "home," and when once one's dust lies in Nykøbing churchyard or on a mountain slope in Java one's spirit will probably

long continue to fly between the two far regions in which it has acquired right of domicile and to which it is rhythmically attracted and repelled as between magnetic poles.

But so long as one has not altogether become "dust," one travels by ships of all sorts and is always landing in Marseille in every kind of weather.

I well remember a time in March; it was Good Friday, and the mistral was blowing so insistently and hard from the north-west that the air was like a solid mass, an avalanche, a waterfall. The day was dry and clear, so full of light that the retina winced, and icy cold. The pale-green waters of the Gulf of Lyon were hidden beneath the cloak of foam formed by the blown-off wave-tops. Thrice at the last moment the pilot abandoned the attempt to steam in between the moles, for the wind took the tall ship's side with such a force that the many thousand horse-power was not enough to hold her to her course, and we circled again in an enormous curve out into the open sea.

But we got into harbour, and in a private room in the Hôtel de Noailles I made, as so often before, my obeisance to France and to Europe.

Next morning I went out to look for the spring which surely must be close by, but the mistral tore

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howling down the Cannebière; there was nothing to be done.

When after long years in the tropics we land in Europe, our first impulse is not to look for the changes that have taken place; on the contrary it is for the continuity of things that our heart longs. It is the immutability of old things that we wish to substantiate. It was for this reason that post-war Europe had such a deadly effect on many middle-aged men who returned home with the memories of youth alive in their thoughts. That was why it warmed one's heart to find down in the old harbour the same Catalan schooners from Barcelona and Valencia discharging oranges as ever before. Well found and smart, yellow and red, with curtains and flowerpots in the cabin windows, complete with wife, children, and dog like some Dutch *tjalk*.

Contented, I boarded a motor-bus that said it was going to Nice, and scarcely had we crossed the low hills that enclose Marseille to the eastward before we found the hiding-place of spring; every valley and slope was white with blossoming fruit trees. The air grew warm, and on the other side of Toulon began the kingdoms of the roses and the lilacs. And when in the evening of Easter Eve we got out at Nice, it was summer.

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Here life seems undeniably a game, an eternal carnival, a constant gay prelude to no matter what. For the onlooker who is alone and not in carnival mood this is lonelier than any place in the world, and therefore stimulating and fertilizing as is London or Paris. A wonderful sight, these tens of thousands on the great promenades who throng to this coast from all the countries of the world to enjoy themselves, which for many, perhaps most, is as much as to say to forget, to escape from the toils of memory. Even here in the midst of this chaos of the works of man, of hotels and casinos that sprout as shamelessly as fungi, it is yet possible to be seized for a moment by the grey and blue beauty of this ancient coastline. One is captured by its sober charm, by the lichen-grey or pearl-grey colour which is that of earth herself and which seems perpetually on the point of passing into rose, as when an aged, strong, and noble face reddens and lights up in a subtle and melancholy smile.

But from the town here it is only in brief gleams that one can, unhindered, see this smile, and thus it takes on something of the pathetic, touching beauty of the summer night, whose power indeed depends among other things upon the fact that midsummer night itself is very brief. It is long

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since one could hear in this place the tranquil voices of the fisher folk or see their little houses of the same grey stone of which the land itself is built.

Hundreds of hotels with their advertisements, and thousands of villas, lie like an eruption over the coast, along the shores of "Angels' Bay," between the two miraculously lovely headlands, Cap d'Antibes and Cap Ferrat. I think it is long since the angels visited it; the "angels" who now infest it with such incredible noise are of another and more modern kind. And yet, if one scraped the paint off — Beneath the surface we are indeed all of us what we have always been, in spite of Freud and steel furniture and other modern toys, in spite of all our enlightenment and technical proficiency and our pathetic study of ourselves.

But now in these post-war years the angels in any event travel here for the most part in enormous Rolls-Royces and Hispanos, and their metallic voices are drowned only by their yelping Pekingese. In the lounges of mammoth hotels in various corners of the world one sees them, stretching out long, thin, silk-clad legs, while they sip their cocktails and with shrill voices try to drown the horrors of the jazz orchestra. Is it, I wonder, the constantly increasing difficulty in penetrating

the din of modern life that makes so many young women nowadays talk in a voice like a trombone?

In the last act of *King Lear*, in which the old King, mad with grief over the misfortunes he has brought upon himself, comes in with the strangled corpse of Cordelia in his arms, in which one feels that youth itself is killed, all life's innocence, all kindness of heart is strangled, that the dignity and wisdom of age is demented and unhinged, in this scene in which every speech is brief, but saturated with sublimity and tragedy, the aged Lear says of his dead youngest daughter these memorable words: "Her voice was ever soft, gentle, and low."

One feels that now, when that voice is silent for ever, memories from happier times come up in his poor, confused old brain, memories from the summer of youth and love when on his knee she for the first time lifted up her low and gentle voice and called him Father.

Perhaps that memory weaves for him in this moment of the highest peak of his misfortune the magic bond between his past and the moment of his death; as by a short-circuit, by an electrical discharge, his memory is illumined — and it gives a sense of happiness deeper, more glowing, than anything life itself can offer; in any case he adds with conviction: "An excellent thing in woman,"

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and with that the circle is closed, the cup emptied of the bitter drink that is the wine of life.

No, it is not from the shores of the Bay of Angels that one should see this coast, and it does not help to climb up into the heights behind Nice. The eruption of hotels and villas has spread for miles.

After all, one should not "seek" for beauty. It is certain that all the views with one or more stars in Baedeker as it were fade, pale, lose their glory if they be sought out according to a definite program and along the shortest way.

Beauty is the most fugitive of game, shy and more easily scared than the ibex; it is to be found fortuitously — but by the right person who knows the master word and carries the magic flower in his hand; that is to say, by artists and poets, the "born" lucky. Of common mortals those only can see and approach beauty whose hearts have been slowly ripened to encounter it.

The best thing to do in a foreign town is, if the weather be good, to saunter out early in the morning and, avoiding the principal streets and boulevards, to look at the trees and the shop windows. Before long, one will be attracted by a cat in a window licking and polishing itself *sans gêne*. Nothing in the world exceeds its charm and grace.

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The objection that there is no need to travel to the world's end to see this is neither here nor there. It is in fact often only by travelling to the world's end that one's eyes are opened to the sweet and simple things that make up the wonder of life.

In another window I saw one day a ring with a sapphire of rare purity. Its blue was deeper and lovelier than that of the Mediterranean; it was as if the essence of all the blueness of sea and sky were crystallized out in this stone from the bowels of the earth. And its blue will live and send out its radiance when the last cathedral has fallen into dust — when the last tourists have ceased their play upon this coast.

If one strolls on up to the higher ground, one gets now and then a view over this town which so emphatically exists "for pleasure only" and therefore scarcely for much joy; one feels instinctively that it is sterile; seen hence it is as if our childless and barren time had set its stamp on all.

Better one morning early to wander in light mist up on to the wooded height where the vestiges of an old castle still remain, to listen in solitude to the mild roaring of the cascade and hear all the bells of Nice ringing in Easter. There is verdure here, and in the mist the silence seems alive like the si-

lence that prevails in a room where one knows that people are sleeping.

On a big round marble-topped table the points of the compass were engraved and a multitude of directions given, not only to the neighbouring peaks and promontories, but to distant places like Madrid and Amsterdam, Rome and Constantinople.

An Arab spahi was wandering disconsolately among the trees, and involuntarily I sought for Mecca on the table, but it was not there. His melancholy eyes looked as though, homeless, he were seeking for a fixed point, a place, a direction towards which to make obeisance—here in this green land where the very crescent in the sky is shouted down by artificial, brutal, and garish light.

Early another morning I wandered up along the hot asphalted road that is called La Grande Corniche. It was warm climbing. Fifteen hundred feet up I passed a little tavern, Aux Lilas Blancs, and then I was alone; all the buses with tourists for Monte Carlo and Mentone had gone by, and the land lay like a study in grey. The grey rocks, the grey pines, and the still greyer olives; but down in the valleys everything was in bloom; they were

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white and blushing with flowering fruit trees, and the fig trees had put forth leaves and bristled with thick green fruit. I was tired and hot, but a branch of whitethorn lay newly torn off on the asphalt — and its summer scent, which I had not known for six years, filled me with youth and with a feeling of the miracle of life and summer; all weariness vanished like summer snow. As so often on long wanderings on the high plains of Java with their hedges of bamboo and wild roses, I became conscious that the scent of flowers can be more powerfully stimulating to the tired body than meat and drink — we too are beings who can suck nourishment from the scent of roses and whitethorn.

I turned down by a little stony path through heather and broom — in bloom at Easter. The snow tops of the Alps shone far off and high up in heaven like beacons of another, a colder and stronger, world — but before my feet, two thousand feet down, lay the Mediterranean, and it was here for the first time I saw the bay as it should be seen, as it was seen by him who named it — namely, from heaven — and I understood that it had to be called Angels' Bay — a worthy rendezvous, a secret meeting-place for celestial beings. That must have happened once on a morning in April in the

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mystical hour between night and daybreak, before our Lord is awake. One of the fairest seraphim is sent to the tryst with Aurora, and a second holds in the horses of the sun-god. The morning star pale and quivering on watch, while the young cherubim float down with the archangels' daughters about whom Fróding wove fantasies, down to the delights of earth that lay outstretched before their eyes, to the bay of Beaulieu, the lovely place. They grazed in play the night-blue bay with their wing-tips, saw their own earthly, veiled — and therefore strangely more enticing — images in the deep mirror; and, as though they had felt an electric shock on contact with the earthly, they rose and glided over the low hills at Cap Ferrat, touched for the second time the sea at the roadstead of Villefranche, and fluttered over Mont Boron, to descend upon the bay that since bears their name — and there remains for ever a gleam, an after-glow of their divine fire over these waters.

The blueness of this bay is, like that of the lapis lazuli, shot with a glint of precious metals.

I gazed long and, taught by experience, I knew that the memory cannot hold fast such an image; one cannot later with certainty call it forth and see it before the inward eye with its life and colours.

But after many years perhaps — as Proust has

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taught us — the cat in the shop window, or the sapphire, or the old blind woman I met by a church door, will emerge upon the plain of memory — and in a flash the whole picture of the Azure Coast with sea and hills will stand warm and radiant before the inward eye, lovely, purged of all dross, supernaturally clear and pure; for then the secret thread is found that knits one's past to the present, when one has conquered time and seen a glimpse of the eternal.

Mankind, alas, is not able to remain long upon the heights; and I began the descent by steep goat-paths, passed the middle and lower Corniche, while enchantment slowly faded and gave place to emphatically mundane sensations, hunger and thirst.

I reached Beaulieu towards one o'clock after seven hours' walking. It was Easter Sunday, and the season was pretty well over, but after a review of my outward appearance I became convinced that I was not presentable at the "better" establishments. I went loitering past many eating-places which I judged to be of a class above me, but at last I saw a place with a dilapidated back garden out towards the glowing asphalt street on which I was dragging myself forward with fire under the soles of my feet and with the sense of

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inward disquiet one has when all the cells are crying aloud for meat and drink.

Gathering all my courage and the last of my forces, I staggered in by an obscure door, but was scarcely come inside before I was seized by respectful but determined hands. My hat was reft from me, and I was conducted into a toilet room where a man, a woman, and a boy began upon a highly necessary cleansing of my outer man. My sports shirt was a deplorable but unalterable fact which accordingly, with great tact, was overlooked, but with clean hands and manicured nails, with shining shoes and a parting in my hair the like of which I had not known since my last ball at Herlufsholm, I was finally pushed "into the presence."

I found myself in one of the most renowned restaurants in France.

My first impression was of being presented at court, but this was quite wrong; after some moments' dazzling confusion I realized where I was — namely, at divine service, and since, as I have said, it was Easter Sunday, I quickly found this quite natural.

As I came into the very long room, one side of which looked out through enormous windows on

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the glittering Mediterranean, a voluntary was being played upon the organ, and the congregation, which was numerous, sat in silent devotion at many small tables in the nave. There were masses of uniformed church officers and lay brethren, each supported by one or two choir-boys, and one of them conducted me swiftly and soundlessly to a seat at a table in a discreet corner where my back was unexposed.

Still a little shyly I began to take my bearings and look over the church and the congregation.

On a nearer view there was no organ, but a violinist wandering alone between the tables — no, wandering is not the word; he glided, he floated in another substance; like Pavlova he seemed to be raised high above the influence of gravity.

He was separated from his audience as by a vacuum. He was a virtuoso on his instrument, and never have I seen a musician who was more conscious of it. He was, as it were, clothed in a film, a skin of that transparent modern stuff, watertight and airtight, with which one nowadays protects things against all unclean touch.

Another personage strode slowly in exalted dignity and calm up and down in the long room.

It was the host himself.

A square, very broad-shouldered and well-built

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man; a Provençal with a dark, powerful, handsomely modelled head on a bull-neck, a slightly hooked but quite un-Jewish nose, a martial moustache, and sparkling black eyes.

It was, as I said, the host himself, and, *mon Dieu*, if the violinist displayed too good a knowledge of his own dignity, this man went about in a permanent halo; he was as a personification of the idea of proprietorship itself. He was the deity and this was his house.

Fascinated, I observed him long — for in the North we seldom see such pure types — but I never caught him, not for a second, mixing himself up with the service or the discussions between the congregation and the priests; never did I see him with so much as a glance signify displeasure or approval.

He personally received each new group of worshippers. Chance strangers only with a cold bow and a motion of the hand that committed them to the hands of the temple ministrants.

More distant acquaintances were distinguished by a condescending pressure of the hand — perhaps a protective and reassuring hand laid upon their shoulders.

But with some few elder gentlemen of distinction, who were accompanied by children and chil-

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dren-in-law, with amazement I saw him bend lightly forward and kiss them fleetingly on both cheeks. The accolade — and, by God, they felt themselves honoured — like an earl to whom a renowned bard has dedicated a heroic poem — consecrated to undergo the mystical and intricate ceremonies that were to come.

For a French family on Easter Sunday, luncheon at R— is no light matter.

The bill of fare and the wine-card, each of the size and thickness of a prayer-book, are treated with a corresponding devotion and reverence, studied with the strained attention with which the archæologist examines a new papyrus.

The ministrants — or I should rather say the advisers or experts — attached to each table partook eagerly, though only on demand, in the discussion. Each moment at a motion of his hand one or two piccolos vanished, and returned wheeling into the room nickel tables on rubber wheels and ball bearings upon which the fundamentals of luncheon lay exposed. Feathered creatures and fishes were exhibited and palpated. Vast lobsters and langoustes crawled heavily among baser creatures of the sea weighed down by the shields that could not save them. Swelling artichokes and enormous asparagus led the thoughts in the right di-

rection, while champignons and morels, truffles and chanterelles spread about them the fragrance of soil after rain.

But the discussion, which certainly was for many not the least delicious part of the repast, went on — not least delicious because, in the spirit which is always willing, one can make one's way through endless menus, while the weak flesh is only capable of availing itself of an infinitesimal fraction of the marvels which the human spirit has created in the territory of this fine art.

If the verbal exchange drew out too long, the *maître d'hôtel*, the supreme pontiff, condescended with measured tread to approach the table and say his decisive, oracular word.

With no less dignity *le sommelier* appeared, the chief butler, who, clad in his traditional black apron, took up, with two adjutants, a post of observation before the way down to his subterranean kingdom.

The menu was submitted to him, and in a magisterial manner he laid down which were the few wines from among which the choice must necessarily be made. With him the discussion was seldom long. None ventured to go against his omniscience, least of all I, when for my *hors-d'œuvres variés* and the *langouste à l'Américaine* which followed he in-

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licated a dry Montrachet that had a bouquet of flowering broom and wild berries. The saddle of lamb entered into a mystical, an astral union with a Château Margaux of which I have not since tasted the like. Here in truth the lamb and the wine met in a manner which one did not need to be a connoisseur of wine to understand. Every cell of the digestive organs from the tip of the tongue downwards proclaimed it in silent ecstasy; it was solemn and yet festal like a triumphal entry, when that noble wine slowly descended and emitted its imprisoned warmth, while its mysterious bouquet radiated its ethereal essences like a play of electrical discharges in one's inner man.

The most significant thing about this temple for the body's needs was, next after the excellence of the food and wine themselves, the respect, the zeal I am tempted to say, with which one is served. There prevailed here a ritual than which no divine service has a stricter or one more utterly consistent in its performance — and a discipline as in a Guard regiment.

When a piccolo dropped one of the big nickel dishes on the floor with a noise like a roll of kettledrums, there was not one of his superiors who turned round, who so much as looked at him. He

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did not exist; he was thinner than air, invisible, unthinkable.

I came more than once during my stay in this improbable house to think of those remarkable drawings by Bateman in his good period, in which one sees human idiosyncrasies carried with logical trenchancy to the verge of insanity.

What happened later to that unfortunate I dare not think.

A broiled fish was wheeled in, lying steaming, brown, and garnished on its nickel dish. It had obviously not thirty seconds since left the pan. None the less the wagon was stopped by one of the staff officers as soon as it came into the room. He lighted a little heap of shavings which was placed on the dish itself to windward of the fish, and as the wagon rolled on upon its triumphal progress towards the waiting guest, the flames from this little fire played over the fish, so that its delicate browning, the fragile crispness of its surface, its steaming heat, should lose not the least fraction of their perfection in the fifteen seconds that would elapse before it reached its destination.

I am not going to attempt to describe the excellence of that meal — absurd thought. Everything that was served was in the class which at exhibi-

tions is labelled *Hors de concours, Membre du Jury*. Alas, the same that we are beginning to say with something of a wry smile about our own generation.

For all its evanescence it was the creation of an artist, and the precise charm of a work of art cannot, as we know, be conveyed in words any more than can the scent of the champak flower, the tone of a Stradivarius or the bouquet of a Château d'Yquem — the most fugitive but the strongest essences in this world; those that one remembers longer than one's youth's ideals, that go deeper into one's being than first love.

I rounded off my luncheon with a pear as big as a small melon. It cost eighteen francs. The luncheon three hundred. But it was cheap; what price is too high for the unforgettable? It cost the same to hear Toscanini conduct the New York Philharmonic Orchestra at the Opéra in Paris.

There were a hundred and twenty-five musicians, and the kettle-drummer drew a higher salary than the leader of the orchestra at the Opera in Copenhagen; and for both manifestations of artistry the price was just, they were co-equal, each perfect of its kind.

This is not to say that I have not been more deeply moved by hearing some summer evening a

young girl play one of Schubert's *Moments musicaux*. For in the domain of enjoyment everything depends on time and place, on the currents and tides in the humours of the body. Presumably these things are under the influence of the moon and stars. I must have absorbed this luncheon under a fortunate constellation, for while I waited for coffee I felt myself to be in a frame of mind which I always recognize immediately; it is made up of equal parts of solemnity, humble and mute wonder, and complete contentment. It comes, for example, in the Sistine Chapel, when I close the book after the last scene of *King Lear*, when I see Giotto's Campanile rising like a divine flower towards the spring Florentine sky.

While I waited for coffee I kept seeing a couple of the chief butler's swains carry an enormous bottle down through the room and stop at particular tables. It was a bottle of the kind that used to be called a "Dame Jeanne"; it contained some thirty or forty litres, and its contents were poured with the utmost care into the bottoms of big glasses which had first been lovingly warmed over a spirit lamp.

In my naïveté I asked one of the experts what this might be. "*Mais c'est notre fine, monsieur,*" he said indulgently.

“ *C’est bon?* ” I was incautious enough to ask. *Enfin* — one grows greatly daring after a luncheon like that. But this was too much for him. He looked round the room as if for help but, since the two *maîtres d’hôtel* and *le sommelier* were far away, he quite naturally turned his eyes towards heaven, muttered a brief prayer, made a deprecating gesture, and finally answered in a calm but small and ice-cold voice:

“ *Oui, monsieur, c’est très bon.* ” And good it was; there was no possible doubt, after the first astonishing second when dark and cool and smooth it flowed lingeringly over the tongue; dark as a summer night, cool, but with an inward warmth that dispersed itself as in swarms of released electrons, and smooth with a subterranean smoothness like moleskin from its life of many years in deep cellars.

It was good — and everything was very good.

A little later I settled down in an enormous *Delage* — I was not going to profane that luncheon by travelling immediately after it by bus or street-car — and I felt that which we human beings seldom feel in our time — complete contentment.

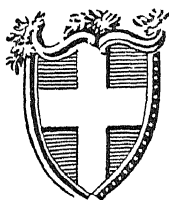
Complete but only brief, for scarcely had we got out of *Beaulieu* before the *chauffeur*, as the habit

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is with that shortlived but strenuous class of person, was rounding the innumerable sharp corners at breakneck speed and whizzing through the tunnels of one of the world's most dangerous and crowded roads, the coast road between Monte Carlo and Nice.

Yes, this art is mature like that of the Renaissance at its height. It is at its zenith, has not yet thrown out wild scions on all sides like the Chinese — the only culinary art which in my experience deserves to be mentioned beside it. With the Chinese there was the same gravity and austerity in the original conception, but with them it has ended in wild rococo — full of all the more or less legitimate refinements that so surely indicate decadence. We — that is to say, almost all civilized people — smile a little self-ironically when we ourselves, and very caustically if other people, ecstatically commend a meal. A Frenchman or a Chinese does not. It is impossible for them to see a joke in it.

And these two peoples resemble one another in this: that they regard the phenomena of daily, of intimate, life in a fashion far more interested and at the same time soberer and more unprejudiced than most.



VI. *Venice*

As is well known, one comes to Venice by train from Verona along a long embankment across the lagoon; one enters a gondola that lies rocking alluringly at the foot of the wide steps which lead from the station yard down to the Grand Canal. But one does not follow the Grand Canal on its majestic curve. The gondolier takes short cuts along narrow slime-green canals, in which the rats swim about the crumbling feet of the palaces and where no other sound is heard in the early morning than the gondolier's short, deep cry as he approaches a corner; and before a quarter of an hour has passed, one notices, unless one has been born immune, the poison working in one's blood; one has

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surrendered and is for ever enrolled among the servants of the aged courtesan.

But one ought to come to Venice by the sea way, through Malamocco and across the lagoon, or in past the Lido, turn down into Canale de San Marco, and anchor off the Piazzetta just opposite San Giorgio Maggiore. This was the way the galleys took when, decked for triumph or shot to pieces and crippled, they headed home from Cyprus or Morea, from Crete or the Black Sea. In these surroundings almost everything is still unchanged; it is thus one should approach the ancient Queen of the Adriatic.

But whether one has dropped anchor from one's own schooner or come with the common herd from the railway station, one goes ashore at the Piazzetta and stands astonished on the world's most entrancing place. This little square is perfectly lovely; not monumental like St. Peter's or like its great neighbour of San Marco, but complete, rounded off, at ease with itself as a finished work of art, as one of the world's few faultless lyric poems. If this square were destroyed by an earthquake, if it had been murdered by Austrian bombs, we should have felt it as something irreparable, a grief for mankind in all countries, among all nations. For one can hardly suppose that the human

spirit would more than once in a thousand years attain so happy a perfection, a harmony so complete, so ripe and conscious.

You ought to sit quietly over on the worn marble steps beneath St. Theodor, or beneath the Assyrian lion, among the gondoliers and their women, and watch the sunshine and the moonlight shifting and replacing one another across the miraculous façade of the Doges' Palace. Then perhaps you will have the rare experience of a purely physical awareness that the evasive, unapproachable beauty of the place sinks into your being, fructifying and creative; that there awakes to life something unsuspected, something never dreamed of, which now belongs to you for time and for eternity, bound inseparably to your spirit. You will feel a new richness in the blood beyond the power of any chemical process to secrete.

Just as the Palace of the Doges has a harmonious and natural effect, despite its audacious, its astounding mixture of a sort of Byzantine Gothic with Renaissance, so San Marco gives a confused and chaotic impression. To speak honestly, its façade reminds one of that of an exhibition building, and the three great bronze flagstaffs in front of it, handsome in themselves, greatly augment the disjointed impression. But the Piazza has restfulness

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and dignity only somewhat destroyed by the all too numerous and all too tame and fat pigeons ; and it is vulgarized further in these post-war years by the multitude of American tourists, who are all-pervading. Yes, Venice, that never has been trodden by the feet of her enemies, is in these years, for the first time in her long history, wholly and entirely in the hands of the barbarians.

For the rest, in Venice as elsewhere one should hold strictly to the determination to avoid sight-seeing. In the first place, it is in itself a barren and deadening occupation ; and then I do not believe in the beauty one seeks systematically, which one invokes like the Japanese who ring up the spirits of their fathers with a bell when they desire to pray or make sacrifice to them.

I have thus made no attempt to view even a small part of the harvest of beauty that a thousand years have gathered in this city which for more than five centuries was the great power of the Levant. Centuries of wealth, of ostentation, of magnificence. Still less will I attempt any description. I sought only in some sunny days and moonlit nights to distil for myself a drop of what is the essence of Venice, its long dead soul ; for, more than in any other of the cities that the tourists seek, everything in Venice belongs to the past. The

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new city is like all new cities, not worse than most, and one gets accustomed to motor-boats on the Grand Canal. Dead greatness, crumbling beauty, vanished wealth, and half-forgotten memories — those are the rather bitter ingredients of the cock-tail that Venice provides.

Keats scarcely knew the lagoon city when, at the age of twenty-three, he wrote his “Ode to Melancholy”:

She dwells with Beauty — Beauty that must die,
And Joy, whose hands are ever at his lips,
Bidding adieu;

but the poem is like an ode to Venice, a temple of melancholy whose beauty so wholly belongs to a vanished time, where literally every stone speaks of the transitoriness of all things.

While the gypsies played, Drachmann sang of the death of youth and love:

And how sobs the violin as if it could have knowledge
That the fair one is long dead and balconies but
balconies.

Yes, this is the city of empty balconies; marble-white they hang over silent canals among marvelously beautiful capitals that slowly crumble and bit by bit vanish into the water of the lagoon.

Venice is not a town for youth, which well may

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weep a moment for the death of beauty, but quickly flies to the Lido and the cities of the living and the saxophone's consoling notes. But for the elder who has learned to know the sombre joys of solitude and its bitter triumphs this is a holy place; here are the right surroundings for meditating upon vanished youth and dead love; here he may raise an altar to melancholy and become its minister and priest, and it may be that here among its dim trophies his spirit will find its abiding place.

What does one do if brought by fate to Venice at the end of May and is alone but not yet ripe to consecrate oneself to melancholy? One seeks first of all for shade and coolness and therefore goes into the Doges' Palace, where the interesting sight is these droves of tourists who, surrendered at discretion to a guide, drag themselves through scores of rooms whose walls and ceilings are adorned with enormous paintings by Tintoretto and Veronese. One scarcely believes one's ears when one hears this guide, in a voice which by eternal repetitions has lost whatever it might have possessed of human sound and expression, grinding out the same rigmarole about these allegories, about these triumphs and victories from Venetian history; I have often watched these men's faces and eyes during

the recital, and there was not one in twenty of them who so much as simulated interest. What a power has snobbery that it can drive these poor wretches in herds to the most tiring and deadening occupation day after day, when they had much rather sit in the shade at Florian's and drink cold, foaming Pilsner! — in truth both a more profitable and a worthier pastime.

Early one morning after having sauntered through the labyrinth of passages to SS. Giovanni e Paolo, so as to make obeisance to the condottiere on his "towering plinth," on my way back I sought shade in Santa Maria Formosa, which then lay half in ruins after the war's bombs, and sat awhile in its poor and not particularly beautiful interior. Together with three or four old women I heard Mass, which an aged priest celebrated, served by a single choir-boy. And on the way out I saw by chance a painting, a Santa Barbara by Palma Vecchio. A marvel, hanging there alone in the half-dark side chapel. Unforgettable, an adventure that filled that morning with an excitement strong enough to carry me back day after day. The picture is without doubt very fine — a crowned Venetian princess rather than any saint — and is now certainly starred in Baedeker; but it had a double, nay, a tenfold effect because it was found

by chance, because it hung there so alone, so poor and forsaken, like a queen in rags.

If it hung in the Accademia among all the Bel-linis and Carpaccios, it would either itself lose its lustre or would rob its neighbours of theirs. It is indeed impossible for a work of art to achieve more than a fraction of its effect when it hangs on a wall with scores of others, all excellent works in themselves. Every work of art is a separate entity and demands to be seen and judged alone. Titian's *Assunta*, which formerly hung in the Accademia among many others, has, thank Heaven, been restored to its place over the high altar in the Frari, where it now fills the huge space with its light and its warmth.

Museums are and always will be an evil, though of course a necessary evil — we cannot all travel to Santa Maria Formosa — but they are for art students, for serious professionals, and not for amateurs in search of beauty. I am by no means entirely convinced that the art “education” that is given to our democratic masses would not be better achieved by photographs which could be looked over at leisure one by one and, when it is desired to compare, two by two, but without the kaleidoscopic and bewildering effect of a museum. Where the *Night Watch* hangs in the Rijksmu-

seum one does not look at the excellent civic-guard pictures of Van der Helst; in the Villa Borghesi one looks only at Titian's *Sacred and Profane Love*; in the Palazzo Corsini at Vandyke's Madonna, and so on. The Sistine Madonna, that *cosa veramente rarissima e singolare*, as Vasari without exaggeration called her, has indeed her own audience-chamber in the Zwinger.

The Japanese, who in æsthetic sensibility tower above us, which perhaps is not without connexion with the fact that they are so lacking in original artists, hang only one painting at a time in a room, put out only one chased bronze vase in a niche with a blossoming branch. There was some sense in the old museums in which all sorts of rarities and curiosities were assembled, but every modern art-gallery is really a monument to the barbarism of our time.

The sensible thing to do of an afternoon is to board one of the little steamers that ply so diligently between Molo and Lido, and swim in the Adriatic. I once met a man there who interested me because he belonged to the numerous class of people who by many years' hard work in the tropics had earned a moderate fortune and now wished to retire, but then found that because of the voracity of the taxes he could not live in his native land; not

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live, that is to say, according to his "standard of living," and that for the great majority of the population who receive more from the State than they contribute is absolutely taboo. We all know that in these days a standard of living can rise. That it should possibly decline is unthinkable. He was now travelling round Europe with his wife in a car with a trailer for the luggage. They spent the winter in Arosa, and the spring at the Italian lakes or the Lido, crossing the Alps to visit Normandy in the summer. In this way he escaped all taxation, and it was cheaper than living in Holland. Is one to be condemned to end one's existence as the Wandering Jew?

But of an evening, warm evenings with the full moon over the Grand Canal — surely one of earth's most gorgeous theatrical sets — of an evening there was in Venice nothing else to do but what all tourists, and, come to that, an endless succession of famous men throughout the centuries, have done — namely, to hire a gondola and drift with the stream. And the astonishing thing is that this incredibly hackneyed spectacular piece has preserved its enchantment. It is like many of the older Italian operatic tunes which, although for a hundred years they have been played by thousands of hurdy-gurdies and café orchestras and millions of ama-

teurs, and in spite of their having been condemned and executed by hundreds of German musical philosophers and pedagogues, have retained in a remarkable way their freshness and power of captivating. This is of course due simply to the fact that they are really original, sprung from the souls of musicians of genius. And they have not only a spontaneous simplicity, an insinuating catchiness which all can understand, but there is besides about many of these arias of Rossini and Donizetti and the young Verdi a primitive naïve virility which perhaps is what makes them eternal. They speak to the child that lives in all of us; they strip us bare again, blow away the sophistries and grey theories with which we have muffled ourselves, and lead us back to fundamental things. They are like worn but genuine louis-d'or, while, for example, in Wagner's gold pieces there is almost always a lack of ring, a suspicion of an alloy of less noble metal. So of an evening one did the inevitable thing and resigned oneself alone to the current and the moon — "In such a night . . ."

When the moon has risen over San Giorgio Maggiore it looks down on hundreds of illuminated gondolas rocking their absurd, elegant lines, and picks out their incredibly suggestive silhouettes against the façades of the palaces; a scene not less

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animated, but with fewer colours, more vulgar, than in former days. "Ah, where are the banners of old and the silk?" Yes, where are the mask and the rapier, the fan and the mantilla? From most one hears music, mandolins and guitars, and those Italian voices to which the language has given that peculiar timbre which makes them so easily recognizable among the singers of all other nations; a ring of metal, of steel and bronze, at once insinuating and martial, like the resting Ares. It is a mistake to suppose that it is pure honey; there is strength in their sweetness, vigour and naturalness in their sensuality.

In the book which bears the pretty but somewhat affected title *Amori et Dolori Sacrum*, the *Sacredness of Love and Pain*, in which Barrès moreover wallows a little too much in the voluptuousness of dissolution and decay, he makes Taine say that we can only endure life by forgetting it. How does one forget life, its loneliness, its disappointments, its sorrows and defeats, the black backscene which, with increasing, terrifying haste, moves nearer and at last closes its four sides together?

Many try to run away, however ridiculous it seems. Some hide themselves in a cell and seek in that way to cheat life. Others still believe that for-

getfulness can be found in what we call pleasure — the philosophy of Omar. They, as we know, find only stupefaction and its inevitable sequel of penitence and shame. Fortunately the vast majority of human beings live their lives in the faith of their fathers, with a hope of immortality as background. The day's work and the night's sleep give to life its rhythm as its sun and moon, and love sustains its hours of rest. In every faith and in all regions of the world it has appeared that mankind can live life worthily and accept death with tranquillity. Only with the help of love and work, and with the rich gift of night, can one forget life; that is to say, forget oneself and thereby enter into the great common heaven of human experience that opens a prospect of eternity.

One is fond of cities in various ways, with various qualities of feeling. Of Paris as of an elderly, wise, and smiling woman friend; of Florence as of the love of one's first youth. Rome one approaches as one of the heroines of history, one of the "great inconsolables." But Venice one loves with the bitter voluptuousness which the octogenarian Ninon's lovers must have felt on approaching the immortal, the world's most practised courtesan.

Venice is the city of the past and of imperma-

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nence, one of the earth's fairest and richest sepulchral monuments.

In Rome one feels strongly the vanity of all human greatness, that all beauty is mortal, but one sees, too, how all rears, how the human spirit is capable of soaring afresh and bringing forth new greatness and new beauty. Therefore the effect of Rome with its ruins and memories is not depressing, scarcely tragic.

But in Venice you are as it were witness to the decay; you are present at the sick-bed in the last days, and therefore it is with a breath of relief that one day you go aboard and head out into the Adriatic. You take a deep breath and, with humanity's fortunate power of arranging its memories, hide Venice away as a valuable curiosity in one of recollection's secret drawers.



VII. *On the Way to Egypt*

To reach Egypt from Venice one sails for three days over a silken, glittering sea ; wine-dark, the ancients said, and they were right. Especially at sunset, when the tissue of the surface plays with every shade of purple, this is transfused by a dark and affluent blue that comes from the lower depths and that only grapes possess. .

The shores are withered green and rose-grey, violet and orange like those of China or Japan. The Dalmatian islands, Apulia, Peloponnesus, and Crete glide past in rapid succession, for this is a sumptuous express steamer which in the season carries the fashionable world of north-western Europe to Cairo — and so it is above all important to waste no time upon the sea of Odysseus.

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We are nearing Alexandria and the land in which, most likely, humanity first became conscious of itself, first meditated upon life and death, and fashioned works not directly intended to support life.

On this sea Odysseus was tossed about for ten years, the story tells, pursued by the malice of angry gods. But the man's courage and endurance and wisdom won him the protection of other and mightier gods and brought him safely through all adventures and perils — and what adventures! Perhaps in the night we have passed the isle of the Phæacians, which now is not to be found on any chart, but which in our dreams ever rises dewy fresh out of the sea; the isle of harmony which lies on the meridian of the golden mean, but in unknown latitude and therefore undiscoverable, since none can steer along the hair-fine, the Olympian line, the island we shall never reach though we sail across endless seas, round innumerable headlands and capes, and see myriads of palm-girt islands emerging from the sea. Circe's island and Calypso's have long been on established routes, but mankind has never been further from the island of the Phæacians than today. There to Odysseus came his goodliest adventure. There he encountered the young woman whose figure seems to me the freshest, the most

harmonious of all that human imagination has created, the King's daughter, Nausicaä. No figure in the world's literature is drawn so vividly in so few lines as she, from the first meeting with Odysseus when she was playing with her ball upon the shore until the hero's departure. Nothing happens, no significant words are exchanged between them, and yet the whole tragedy lives before our eyes. The tragedy, but that is just it; there is no tragedy here, for Nausicaä was of a different stuff from the heroines of tragedy; she was not in revolt against life and its necessities; her nerves were like those of a Spartan woman; her blood fresh and pure as sea water. She felt herself drawn to the hero, but understood that he was under the ban of a greater destiny, and she bowed obediently, without rebellion, in pride and humility, to the inevitable. She did not throw herself into the sea from the rock from which she watched his ship sailing away for ever; she returned to her father's house, married a Phæacian hero, and bore him sons and daughters of the race that shapes a people's greatness. There is no tragedy in this, and one understands Goethe having abandoned it after working on it for years.

But where lives now your spirit, Nausicaä, and where are the daughters you bore and brought up

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in your image? Them it is for whom men seek day and night and in dreams. They it is who win men's love till death; it is only women like these who can make men of us and heroes.

On another island where Odysseus landed lived another woman of another, far less uncommon type. She was beautiful, hospitable, and sociable. But she gave nothing for nothing, and men were changed into swine in her proximity, for men have never of their own power been able to resist the sorcery of seduction. Circe's island has become a mighty realm, with colonies in all parts of the world, and in all lands men grunt and root with their snouts round the palaces of Circe.

But in the time of Odysseus there was still balance in things; life was not yet twisted awry; and so the antidote to the sorcery grew upon the island itself. The plant moly, whose root was black but its flower white as milk and which gave power to its bearer to resist the enchantment that issues from the breasts and loins of women.

"The gods called it moly, for mortal man will scarce prevail to dig it up, but to the gods all things are possible."

And the god of wisdom came to Odysseus' aid. Where now grows the rare and potent plant?

What god will help us weaklings to find its hidden habitat? For our time stands in need of it more than any before, especially perhaps on the other side of the Atlantic. It is said that America gave us the potato. Would it not be a royal return gift if a bold and crafty European were secretly to plant moly in the fertile and still so virgin soil of the United States?

We touch at Brindisi, the terminus of Via Appia, at the narrowest point of the Adriatic; here the legions embarked that Rome sent to the East. Plutarch tells of their leaders, of Æmilius Paulus, poor, noble, and austere, one of the last from the heroic days of Rome. It was he who, apparently without cause, divorced his excellent wife, by whom he had full-grown and promising sons. When his friends, scandalized, reproached him for this, he took off his shoes, showed them, and said: "Is there anything the matter with these shoes, are they not new, of the best material, made by the most skilful craftsmen? And yet they pinch me." He conquered Macedonia, the land which a hundred and fifty years before had been invincible, whose armies had subdued the Balkans, Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Persia, Turkestan, Afghanistan, and the western part of India. What if Alexander had lived thirty, nay, even ten years longer, and

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had turned his arms against the West, against Italy? How then would the history of Rome and of the world have taken shape? In any event in a different and to us an inconceivable fashion. A man catches a fever in Babylon, and the world's destiny is changed decisively; and yet modern historians love to belittle and explain away the importance of the great geniuses, especially if they were soldiers.

Plutarch tells of Titus Flaminius, the first great Hellenophil, the first known to history of the long line of enthusiasts for the Greek who have this, if nothing else, in common, that they all became profoundly disillusioned when they learned to know the object of their enthusiasm more intimately. In this imperfect world one should certainly confine one's enthusiasm to abstract conceptions, such as liberty, democracy, the emancipation of women, and the like. Since in the nature of things one will never live to see their complete realization, one is able in a certain degree to preserve the illusion. Flaminius gave the Greeks freedom, the greatest blessing of a people, it is said. But undoubtedly the most dangerous of gifts. An infernal machine that is certain to explode, but is not set for a definite time. I wonder if any other freedom has value than that which is won and maintained by the hardest struggles, with the bloodiest sacrifices.

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This view is quite certainly not shared by our young, already a little tired, Danish democracy, which in full freedom has been allowed to reform Denmark into the existing Fools' Paradise, but which is unwilling to sacrifice the life of a single unemployed man to preserve it.

The only real democracy which to my knowledge has been able to maintain itself for long — namely, the Swiss — seems always firmly determined to defend itself to the last against all comers.

We read, too, about Sulla, Rome's first tyrant, the only one of Rome's dictators before Augustus to die a natural death, although he resigned the power during his lifetime. A genius who, in contrast with modern radicals who believe in the goddess of reason, trusted in luck, in dreams, and in the inspiration of the moment.

Now, too, Rome has a dictator, and affronted democrats the world over cannot find words hard enough to condemn the tyranny of the Blackshirts. Yet is there any perceptible difference between Sulla's lictors and proscription lists, and the Fascists' castor oil and their internments on little out-of-the-way islands? The mass executions of the Russian revolution, its rule of terror, and its sadistic cruelties, continued through many years, have never to any extent worth mentioning aroused the

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indignation of the European democracies, a fact which gives material for reflection. It will be amusing to see what our democrats will do at a pinch.

Across this strait passed Crassus and Pompey, Brutus and Antony, who all found their death in that East which has drunk so much of the best blood of Europe. Cæsar looked out anxiously across it for the ships that were bringing the remnant of his veterans.

And what swarms of races have later in history journeyed and contended here! Byzantines, Normans, Saracens, and Venetians, until the winged lion conquered and for many centuries held absolute sway over these waters. Then came the Crescent; but it, too, sank into the sea, and now it is Rome again, the eternal, whose pennants rule over this sea.

We had on board more than a hundred Jewish emigrants bound for Palestine, the Holy Land. They came from Poland and East Prussia and Czecho-Slovakia — for the most part quite young men and women of the most heterogeneous appearance and the most mixed extraction. Many of them had absolutely nothing Jewish about them. These were unkempt Germans of the *Wandervogel* type, machine-clipped, with bullet-heads, dressed in indestructible Tyrolean clothes; there were Bohe-

mian shop clerks and Polish labourers and coal-miners ; there were not a few with a secondary-school education. All together physically a pretty vigorous and not undernourished set of people, and thus far well qualified to till the soil under the sun of Palestine — but can farmers be made of the town Jews of central Europe? What future has this colonization which England staged in a romantic but unreflecting moment? And how will they get on with the Arabs, the successors of the Canaanites of old? It will be extraordinarily interesting for the next generation to see the result of this new immigration into the Promised Land. There is no sign of a new Joshua, and in our days it will take more than a blast of trumpets to bring down the walls of Jericho. The worst difficulty will perhaps be of an insuperable kind — will lie in the incapacity of the Jews for maintaining good and peaceful terms with the people among whom they live. On an ancient stele in the Archæological Museum in Cairo, King Menephta, of I do not know which dynasty, records categorically in so many words that he has given orders for the complete extermination of the Jews. This as we know was never accomplished ; the vigour of the race was too great ; but how many times in the course of history, and in how many countries, has not such a

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command been given? Why does this gifted race so seldom understand how to win the friendship of its surroundings? Why is the curse upon them from that day to this?

Santayana says somewhere in his soliloquies that Jews (and, with a generalization perhaps a little too sweeping, he adds Germans and Americans) are snatching at the prize of life instead of winning it by work and struggle and endurance. "And when you do that," he says, "you resign the dominion, lay down the sceptre over your own inmost being, and you will never attain real happiness, dignity and peace." It may be so; we may leave it at that. But is it possible to believe that there is any short cut to the real values of this life, to happiness and peace? It must be clear to everyone that the only way to permanent success in that country lies through co-operation in peace and friendship with the Arabs, who indeed have precisely the same historic rights. But man is not a particularly peaceable animal, and our instinctive antipathies are tough and difficult to eradicate. What is going to happen when the Jews under English protection have grown strong enough?

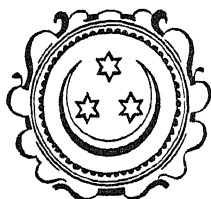
Meanwhile these young people sing and play (quite unmusically, oddly enough), and dance

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Polish dances, frightfully awkward and clumsy, and, with an unconcern which does not come unexpectedly, spread themselves over the whole ship with their sausages and cheese, a proceeding which the democratic and easy-going Italians take in good part. There are already violent collisions between their different sects, so I hear from an American, a secretary to some Zionistic society or other, who is accompanying this troop as a sort of dragoman. He is one of those excellent and sensible men, quite widely travelled, half-educated, of a type one knows. One would think really well of them if they did not always have that happy, self-satisfied, damnably humble smile which seems to be a stigma of all philanthropic secretaries and travelling religious propagandists. One feels downright compelled to pat them on the shoulder and tell them how good and self-sacrificing they are, and to assure them that their reward *cannot* fail — which is what they secretly fear. But in the meanwhile I hope that a high and savage range of mountains with insurmountable passes may lie between their future habitation and my own. And let me at the same time offer up a heartfelt thanksgiving that it is not my fate to live and work next door to the chosen people in the Holy Land; and

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that my way lies farther along the old trail, to a greener land with great volcanoes and the strife of the clouds and the play of the lightning about their shoulders — the flash of spears from Krishna's and Arjuna's hosts.



VIII. *Cairo*

IF for your sins you be stranded in Cairo in the month of June, your problem will be to find cool places of refuge where you can defend your lungs against the dust and your eyes against the little ubiquitous flies that attack them with phenomenal persistence. One rest and solace to the eyes is the great red-blossoming acacia which flowers here in June. "Flamboyant," "Flame of the Forest," it is called, and to Europeans it is the first herald from the world of the tropics. He who has never seen "the crimson tree" of which Johannes V. Jensen sang upon the travels of his youth must forgo one of the world's miracles. What is red? Roses and rubies, cinnabar and blood. Roses, I say, the red-

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dest roses Northern fancy ever dreamed of, are to the crimson tree as a Danish romance to the sextet in *Lucia*, as a quiet summer evening to a night of tropic storm. When the red acacia leaps into bloom in Java it arches its flaming cupola for months together, lifts and spreads it against the tropic sun like an eruption, an outbreak of the pent-up, half-stifled, savage fire of the very tropics. We do not understand this pitch of inflorescence, we are inclined to a certain coolness in the matter of floral orgies; but there it is, the miracle; it stands palpably before our eyes, this flaming crown full of the murmuring of doves, of the hum of thousands of drunken bees, alive with the fluttering of myriads of butterflies. We can but humbly bow our heads and mutter our "Allah akbar."

A good cool place for the later afternoon hours of these penitential weeks is the Zoological Gardens. A cool, shady park with much running water, which by the strangest of optical illusions seems to run uphill and to have been led over the highest-lying parts of the garden. There are pretty reed-fringed ponds and little lakes on which tropical ducks and black swans swim, while flamingoes stand dreaming and delicately flushing on their patient vigil. Black and white speckled kingfishers keep zealous watch perched on withered boughs,

and plunge from time to time with such startling violence and so vertical a drop that it seems their straight, sharp, heavy beaks must stick in the bottom for good. Herons by the score sit in the bushes and trees round the lake or stand in the shallow water by the margin, all completely motionless, marvellously cocksure and malicious, while the sharp little eyes above their pedantic beaks stare at the still, green surface of the water with so piercing an intensity that one would suppose they were seeking for something irreplaceable that had been lost, that the philosophers' stone, the answer to the riddle of the Sphinx lay hidden at the bottom of the lake.

Great cactuses and oleanders are everywhere in bloom, and the crimson tree's crown shouts down all other instruments in the symphony of colour.

Suddenly above the quiet surface the hippopotamus lifts his island of a head as with a gentle submarine volcanic eruption, a rugged, bare, and rocky island; it seems too incredible, as if the Creator's imagination had run dry, like Scheherazade's on the thousand and first day, before the river horse was created.

I saw the ostriches perform their sunset dance. These handsomely dressed, distressingly large birds, the cocks correct and elegant in black and

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white, the hens ravishing in a froth of rose and grey — they suddenly lift all their shining wing and tail feathers into the air and in the execution of downright indecent dance steps exhibit their completely naked bodies and thin legs passing into powerfully developed thighs before all the unprepared and greatly shocked spectators. It was a repulsive and, because of the prodigious size of the birds, an almost uncanny spectacle which recalled to me a disagreeable memory.

One hot summer day I was wandering alone in the Bois de Boulogne out in the neighbourhood of the big cascade at Longchamps. The day was exceptionally fine, with clear sun and still air trembling in the heat, but with cool, pale-green shadow over all the little paths that wind through the thick undergrowth. It was still June, and myriads of song-birds were in full song, butterflies were fluttering, bees and wasps humming, the air was saturated with the scent of hawthorn, honeysuckle, and wild chervil. I had lunched at Armenonville, had sat alone under the chestnuts by the little pond and watched a pair of flycatchers plunging by turns from their look-out station in a weeping willow into the sea of air in search of prey; strangely fascinating to see the little pied bodies rolling and tumbling off invisible waves like corks in a rough

sea; they always returned in triumph with the prey. For a long time I watched their graceful play and envied them their apparently limitless appetite, while myself I ate one of the best luncheons that hitherto has come my way. A half-bottle of a not very young Montrachet had finally created in my mind, if not downright peace with this world and its affairs and ways, at least a definite armistice. In a receptive mood and in the weather described above I accordingly sauntered out along the narrow, shady paths towards Longchamps. There was not a soul in sight.

At a turn of the path in a place where the undergrowth was very thick and the shadows deeper, the scent of the thorns stronger, more stupefying, I saw a woman, quite well dressed, coming to meet me. She looked to be in the middle thirties; her face seen from some distance was quite handsome, but with the most extinct and devastated expression I have ever seen in a human countenance. Only in certain drawings by Rops is there anything to be found which could compare with it. When we had come quite near to each other she suddenly stopped in front of me and calmly and silently with a slow, patient gesture lifted her skirts about her and showed, like the ostriches, without a smile, without so much as an attempt at

a smile, that she had nothing else on. As an honest tradesman exhibits goods about which he himself has no illusions. Her face was completely expressionless, her eyes stared vacantly, extinct like twin craters, at mine. Dumbly and blindly she offered herself, her poor body, like — yes, like what? For even the female of the brute creation in heat preserves a trace of redeeming coquetry, tries to play the fugitive pursued by the compelling male. Blindly and dumbly as a plant that offers its chalice to the bee.

But she was a human being, one of our like, made in God's image and with "a soul that was created to strive." How, through how many, what countless defeats, had she reached this complete shamelessness, this final degradation? I silently shook my head and passed on, but the armistice was over. The sunlight had lost something of its radiance, and the song of the birds and the cool fragrance of the shade their enchantment. It was as though unreason and despair had knocked at the door, had impudently shown their spectrefaces for a moment in the light of day, as though one had heard a snarl from the cage in which day by day we hold them imprisoned in the depths of consciousness.

I left the ostriches still engaged in their pecul-

iar dance, felt no desire to stop by the monkey cages, but looked with unmixed pleasure at the giraffes moving quietly about in their shady little grove. The giraffe has the gentlest philosopher's head imaginable and, unlike that of his cousin the dromedary, his philosophy is obviously optimistic, which is the more remarkable in that he is the most persecuted of animals and is able neither to defend himself nor to hide himself nor to run away. What can have been the intention in putting this big, defenceless animal on open plains inhabited by lions and leopards? But he is not alone in this world in holding fast to a philosophy which is increasingly repudiated by life. There are many to this day who hold that we all live among lions and leopards, between the devil and the deep sea, and that we cannot do much otherwise than the giraffe — namely, try constantly to forget it.

With the dromedary it is otherwise. His philosophy is of an austerer school. He is born and brought up in a land where it is always far to green groves and cool, shady places. A frightful land of yellow sand, of naked, savage rocks and thorny vegetation, under a burning sun and a white burnt-out sky. There are years between its rainstorms and scores of miles between its wells. In compensation the night sky arches purer, colder,

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and darker and the stars twinkle with a harsher flame than in other places. In this land is born the dromedary with a hump upon his back, formed to be laden. No wonder that he carries his queer, flat, snaky head so high, that he waves it with such a superior air on his curved neck as with his long, gliding step he enters the oasis. He has a right to curl his thin, expressive lips disdainfully at oxen and asses on his way through stinking, clamorous bazaars, to lower his heavy eyelids so haughtily above his strong and melancholy desert profile.

He is a realist and a cynic; he bears his hump and its burden through life's boundless and eternal desert without complaint, without ostentation; like a Diogenes he asks only water, bread, and a little shade.

In the morning one of the coolest places in Cairo is the Egyptian Museum, which lies down by the Kasr-el-Nil bridge alongside of enormous barracks which, in spite of all polite and ceremonious proclamations of Egypt's so-called independence, still fortunately accommodate twelve thousand English soldiers.

In these vast, cool halls one stands suddenly face to face with a wonderful and ancient art that makes an overwhelming, an enchanting, a fascinating impression. For these statues of kings

and gods in granite and limestone and diorite are many of them colossal and in the highest degree monumental; but the astonishing thing is that the faces are at the same time often treated with a delicacy, an expressiveness, an individualized realism of which one will scarcely find the like.

Centred in front of the end wall of the great main hall is enthroned the mighty double statue of King Amenhotep III and his Queen, Taia, in white limestone twenty-three feet high. On the base their three children are represented in high relief. A happy couple who smile the smile of contentment, of secure possession. They have learned to know this world and its glory; while not overvaluing what it has to give, they consider that, all in all, the game is well worth the candle. They sit beside each other, and she lays her right arm about his loins with a discreet, possessive gesture; in bearing and the carriage of the head they are every inch a king and a queen.

On one of the side walls stands King Senwosri III, in reddish-grey granite, a short-necked, broad-shouldered type, who with clenched hands and arms along the sides of his body strides forward with a long, firm, heavy tread. The face seems surprisingly familiar to a Northerner; it has a certain simplicity and ponderousness, something

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“nordic” in its expression; indeed I am inclined with Johannes V. Jensen to call it Cimbric, not to say Jutic. Though he is beyond question a man and a warrior, his mouth has preserved something sulky and boyish which would make him irresistible to the motherly type of woman.

In one of the side galleries there are several portraits of Tutankhamen, a fine and intelligent young man's face, modern, full of the awareness and understanding which are human rather than royal virtues. A melancholy, resigned mouth and weary eyes, despite his youth.

It is to this young man's grave that the barbarians are now (1927) streaming from both sides of the Atlantic to the wildest Negro music of advertisement and sensation, while the world's greatest and most “reputable” newspaper has secured to itself the sole right to make public the details of the violation of the tomb. It is as if this face, which is irradiated with an ancient and exquisite culture, by its melancholy smile had foreseen and forgiven even this barbarism; one can very well read upon his sensitive lips the words: “Forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

From high above gleams the goddess Mut's mysterious, fateful Gioconda smile. In its astonishing virtuosity it is reminiscent of Leonardo, but

the achievement is finer, more divine, more sphinx-like, attained with greater economy of means. She reminds one not a little of certain Buddha and Bodhisattva heads of the classical Hindu-Javanese period.

The imperious face of Thotmes III is rendered in many different statues both sitting and standing. Vivid, clear-cut, vigorous features; delicately curved nose, thin lips; a suspicion of a smile that betrays the consciousness of inexhaustible reserves. Isis is his mother; his features have been given to numerous sphinxes.

The goddess Hathor, who is represented in the likeness of a cow, is met with everywhere. Kings seek shelter and refuge and sustenance under her neck and belly. She is the goddess of love as the life-giving principle — “representing what is true, good and best in women as daughter, wife and mother,” says a guide-book published by a modern Egyptian in ludicrous English. There is in the cow’s head and eyes a profound sense of fecundity and quietude, and in the gentle yet proud and dignified movement of its body and limbs a ponderous but godlike grace, that completely reconcile us to this somewhat unexpected symbol of the goddess of love.

But it is undeniably a far cry to the Venus of

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Cyrene, on her revolving pedestal, gleaming white and naked under the searchlights in the Therme Museum, clad only in her formidable armour of invincible youth, strength, and sweetness.

One may spend many peaceful hours in the contemplation of this sculpture, while Cairo, as it were, fuses in the sun, and the valiant little flies buzz outside in vain. There are few tourists in June, but yet in these mornings I heard at least a score of times a so-called "guide," an ignorant Egyptian, reel off the same banalities to still more ignorant Americans, all following with their forefingers in Baedeker or Murray, delighted like children to confirm that it "tallied." Indeed the more one sees of them the more staggering these American tourists appear, who in these post-war years in vast flocks and herds graze in museums and cathedrals of the old world, its palaces and more easily accessible beauty spots. It is a quite distinct form of mass psychosis. It obviously bores the greater number of them indescribably, nor do they try in any way to simulate either an understanding or a love of art. One might almost explain this snobbery as a homage to beauty and renown, in the same sense that cant may be regarded as a compliment to virtue.

It was amusing to observe that the museum is

visited by many Egyptians, including not a few veiled women. How wise of Islam to hide its women behind the veil, and how short-sighted of the "women's movement" of the West to exhibit them more and more unveiled! Women have undoubtedly a natural genius for undressing. Men possess a certain amount of inborn modesty; women are modest just as far as fashion demands it. And even if everything in the world be good, this, as a wise man has said, does not hold good in regard to every place and every time. And undressing, like tooth-extraction, has its natural limit — namely, absolute nakedness. With the present bathing—"dress" women are standing on the last rampart — in particularly graceful attitudes, no doubt — but there is no farther to go along that way; here is the point at which even sacred progress must stop. One more step and she will end, like Ilsebil, in the muddy ditch. After which the bucket is turned and we begin over again with veil and train, ay, and with corsets and chastity-belt.

These modern Egyptian women were certainly veiled, but yet clearly found themselves at a perilous stage of transition. They were in reality extremely alluring in black silk cloaks, with hoods half-way down their foreheads, skirts short enough for champagne-coloured silk stockings, shapely

ankles, and small feet in high-heeled Parisian shoes to do themselves full justice. A white veil of the most transparent silk muslin covers the tip of the nose and the lower part of the face, while allowing the full, lacquer-red lips to be more than suspected, and it is carefully adjusted so that well-waved tendrils of hair come into view on either temple. The whole effect is the daintiest imaginable and far from nunlike.

Le ciel défend, de vrai, certains contentements.
Mais on trouve avec lui des accommodements.

There is a considerable elasticity in modern Islam's maintenance of the traditions.

For the rest we have another confirmation here that there is nothing new under the sun. As clearly appears from several statues both in wood and in stone, bobbed hair was the mode at court in the days of the fourth dynasty — that is to say, three or four thousand years before our era — and the well-to-do middle class then as later adopted the fashions of the aristocracy — see the wooden statue of “the overseer's wife,” also of the fourth dynasty. It is pleasantly reassuring to see the immutability of human nature demonstrated before one's eyes, the recurrence of the same thing. It gives hope that our own angels will come back from

their latest escapade, which has brought them into so many unfortunate positions equally unbefitting their spiritual and bodily stature.

In general, for those who know the East, Cairo is not a particularly interesting city, and large parts of its population have been demoralized by tourism, one of the worst scourges of the present time. If Italy's present dictator had accomplished nothing more than to teach his people to keep a stiff back and hold up their heads in the presence of foreigners, he would well deserve an eternal place in her history. Just the one conspicuous fact that a beggar is now a rarity, whereas before there were probably half a million who directly or indirectly accepted alms, would be enough to make him immortal. How deeply the new spirit has struck root in the people I saw with my own eyes, when a little girl of four or five asked for a soldo on the great steps leading to Santa Maria Aracoeli; a somewhat larger boy of perhaps seven or eight seized her immediately and resolutely led her away, reproving her the while. In Egypt it will be long before the people get so far in respect for themselves, but yet one cannot despair of the future of this people when one sees the works its spirit has created. This spirit has now lain fallow for more than two thousand years; how long will

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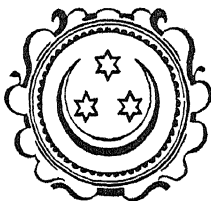
it be before it once more begins to bloom? The genius of the Italians is of a more active kind; true, it began a couple of thousand years later, but with what incredible fertility it has now throughout long ages been producing geniuses, soldiers and priests, statesmen and saints, scientists and artists! When the tremendous flow of the Renaissance ebbed out in baroque and rococo, a new spring welled forth; the talent was transferred to music and filled the nineteenth century with its melodies; and even in our fathers' time there were a Garibaldi and a Cavour, the last and greatest condottiere and a new Machiavelli who wove upon a larger loom.

And everything is to be expected of the latest Italy, which for the first time is taking all the faculties of the people into her service; what we see is changed every day before our eyes "into something rich and strange."

Despite the Pyramids and the Sphinx, which is completely ruined, despite the sunset seen from the parapet of the citadel by the Mosque of Mehemet Ali, despite the Nile and the whole many thousand years old patina that lies over this land, I cannot say that it made any profound impression upon one who knows something of the farther East — apart from its sculpture. The ancient

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architecture farther up country I have not seen. Neither in beauty nor in distinctive character can Cairo vie, for example, with Peking with its glazes of orange and royal blue, its beautifully swung roofs, and its enormous wall, at whose foot the kingly camels have waited patiently throughout history.



IX. *Port Said*

It was once my lot to spend a week in a hotel room in Port Said waiting for a ship. There had been rioting in Cairo and Alexandria, and the Sirdar had been murdered; there was a certain disquiet in the air, a certain tension, which, however, one had difficulty in taking quite seriously in this country. None the less it was particularly reassuring to see from my hotel window an English battleship glide in past the de Lesseps statue, followed by its bodyguard of cruisers and destroyers; to see her come to anchor in the Canal and lie, quiet but astonishingly threatening, off the Canal Company's offices, with the big guns of her turrets turned upon the town.

She was the *Iron Duke*, Jellicoe's flagship at Horns Reef. In her conning tower had stood in the historic hours of that summer day and night the man who, as Churchill says, was the only man who could have lost the war in half an hour. A unique responsibility. One understands the Nelson signals not having been given, his choosing of the safe course, his not setting the fate of England and the world upon a single game even though he had good cards in his hand. But if — if a Nelson or even a Beatty had stood where he stood? None can give the answer, no human being can have a complete view of the enormous chessboard. One may dream; the Baltic opened, no collapse of Russia; Germany forced into the defensive two years earlier; bewildering vistas and the idlest conceivable day-dreams, but rather fascinating at times.

In the wake of the *Iron Duke* my ship stood in to the harbour with her coquettish pennant flapping cheerfully. The Dannebrog flies on every sea, we assert, but, all the same, it is such a rarity to see it that one feels the same shock, the same sense of a happy miracle, as when a young man meets his sweetheart unexpectedly and sees the colour mount into her cheeks.

I went aboard and found my cabin, saw with what discreet and genuine taste the saloon and

cabins were fitted up, far surpassing all other ships that ply to the East, and felt myself at home. Then we weighed anchor and stood southward down into the Canal, dipping the Dannebrog respectfully to the *Iron Duke*, and the *Iron Duke* condescended courteously if curtly to dip the white ensign of the British Navy to us.

When dusk had fallen, the new moon's first slender sickle lay low in the west, and close beside her Venus shone with the romantic radiance she attains here against the pure, vapourless desert sky; forming together the mystic sign over the portal of the tropics. One understands how the races that live beneath these skies have felt profoundly moved, stirred to their souls' depths, by these mystical, significant heavenly portents, how they have adopted them as their own badge and set them on their banners and escutcheons. And what could be more glorious, what better fire a man to valiant deeds, than to sail, ride, and fight under the sign of Venus and the waxing moon?

It takes three or four days to sail through the Red Sea, and if one has the sense to choose the winter months for this journey, no pleasanter way of passing the time can be imagined. One glides under mild breezes over the bluest of seas in enchanting summer weather, and this weather con-

tinues into the Indian Ocean until one is nearing Ceylon, where one meets the veritable face of the tropics.

But in summer it is a purgatory, and with a following wind it is hell. It is worst at night. When you have been lying naked in your bunk for hours in the moist, steaming darkness, when you have turned yourself and your pillows, at last only slowly and at longer and longer intervals moved a leaden arm or leg, then at last you feel an indescribable prostration, a heaviness comes over you, the profoundest mental and physical weariness ; you feel that it is in vain that you struggle against the evil and hostile powers of nature, and then the moment may come when you feel something in yourself give way, submit, succumb. Why keep on when the heavens, when the air you must breathe, are so inimical? There you lie, naked and helpless as when you were born, and at best it is only a little while to the hour when you must go. Tired to death, you feel the core of your being disintegrated, melted away in the darkness and the heat, and you leap up because you have suddenly realized with terror that you were nearer death than you were aware, that the Red Sea's heat was more formidable and more severe than you had been willing to believe. I have often listened with a sceptic's smile to stories about

people who have gone mad from heat in the Red Sea and jumped overboard; now I understand with the deep, inward understanding that comes of personal experience.

The Indian Ocean, too, should be avoided in the summer months, for then is blowing the south-west monsoon, which from June to September sweeps howling and complaining from Africa to Ceylon and India and Sumatra and lashes this ocean, so placid at other times, into mast-high waves. No sooner were we clear of Socotra and rejoicing to be out of the heat belt than the monsoon took us abaft the beam and for six days tossed us in every direction, and the seas washed incessantly over decks and bridges. It shook one to the core when one of the heavy seas broke with full force over the labouring ship and sent its hundreds of tons of water down upon her decks. It is with a sound like thunder that the sea breaks on the quarter, and it is like the stroke of a steam hammer when the dense mass of water falls down over the deck. Then all is still, the ship drowned and lost to sight, one with the foaming tumult; one does not hear the engines running. And then one notices as it were a trembling of the whole ship as she shakes herself cautiously, as if to try whether all her bones be whole, and then rises slowly and heavily while the masses

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of water welter from side to side and cascades pour from the freeing-ports and scuppers. There are several seats missing and an iron companion-way, and heavy iron rails are bent and twisted like wires.

A storm at sea is one of the things that are due to a man from life. People nowadays talk a good deal about the "rights of man," which seem once for all to have been laid down in a "declaration," but yet are constantly throwing up more or less wild shoots. It has always puzzled me a little whence our democratic fellow-creatures get their firm conviction about what cannot be seen, this constancy in what they claim. We are born naked, or at most with a little protective coating of wax, and, as we know, pretty defenceless in face of an ungentle world. Blind as kittens and tender at the extremities as hermit crabs, as, for the matter of that, we continue to be. Have we when we are born any "right" at all except to the air we breathe, to the use of our muscles, and perhaps access to our mother's breast?

I have assisted at the entry into this imperfect world of more than a thousand embryo human beings and have often speculated about their rights. Is there anything inherent in "the right to work," "the right to vote," "women's right to equal pay for equal work"? We have not been in

the least afraid to abolish age-old and inherited rights with a stroke of the pen. And quite rightly, no doubt. We nowadays secure numerous "rights" by our laws, of which before long no one outside the circle of specialists will have knowledge; a poor human child will presently have rights to so many fictitious and worthless things, which in turn bring with them so many restrictions and limitations in general liberty, that as he gradually grows up he arrives at a hopeless position in face of the fundamental truths of life. We have freedom of speech, of assembly, of the press, which are a source of satisfaction only to very few outside the circle of the demagogues and journalists; Russia under the czars was, as we know, in many ways the freest country in Europe. But one no longer has any rights over one's wife and children, in this queer time in which for the first time in history men have renounced the sceptre and, like Heracles, spin for Omphale. Quite amusing, but a little unbecoming. Since it *cannot* be of long duration it is not worth taking too seriously.

A man should have the right at some time in his life to have sat a galloping horse, to have smelled powder, to have stood on the deck of a ship in a gale. He should have the right to the deep and genuine emotions which primitive and natural ex-

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periences create and which fructify and enrich the soul. And a woman ought to have the right to two things in the world, but to no more: the right, namely, to say no and to say yes; that is the fulfilment of her deepest instinct, and enough. For when she loyally follows it all other things shall be given to her. Thus it has always been upon earth, and in the nature of things still is; but it is hard to see through all the curtains and paper screens with which the eunuchs all over the world seek to conceal the natural.

The Indian Ocean is indigo blue, but of a dull, opaque shade and without the purple of the Mediterranean below Crete; it is a deep and pure colour that accords marvellously with the white wave-crests. What a limitless world is the sea! What prodigality of genius on the part of the Creator! Its vastness, its immensity, has always filled my mind with the wonder which is the beginning of everything. One can never tire of following the eternal pageant out there beneath the sky and the sun. It takes shape and life under one's eye; like hosts of horses with flying manes; like storm-hunted swarms of birds; like the wild and licentious play of Tritons and naiads. But if one lies long on one's chair on deck and watches it patiently, one

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may perhaps in a glimpse contrive to *see* something that hitherto one has only *known*, the thousands, the nameless multitudes of drowned seamen who march eternally out there in their blue jackets with white collars to the music of the monsoon in an endless and solemn procession.

It is the loneliness at sea that gives the strongest impression of its vastness; even on the highly frequented routes, on which scores of ships travel on regular services, days and nights may pass in which one sights nothing but sea and sky, not so much as smoke in the distance. One comes up at dawn on to the wet deck, scans the horizon through a glass; but there is nothing but the setting moon, the last belated stars, and the steel-grey, gently heaving sea, pale in the morning light. If we were not burdened with all our damned useless knowledge, if charts and wireless and all such inventions of Satan did not exist, then any morning on the ocean we could say with the Ancient Mariner that we were the first that ever burst into that silent sea. The joy of discovery, the rapture of being the first in unknown lands, is very difficult to realize on dry land; in this respect the world has grown small.

At sea it is otherwise. Coasts and islands are charted more or less accurately, but so soon as one

is off the great ocean highways one is in reality on unknown terrain, where no keel has before ploughed the waters and where everything is possible from undiscovered islands to the great sea serpent. Perhaps this is one of the secrets of the sea's remarkable power of attraction. Why have mankind always fared across the seas, and how is it possible that they keep on? In spite of privation and danger, in spite of the laborious, the monotonous, the comfortless life. Modern seamen are for the most part married and are lucky if they see their wives and children for a few days three or four times a year (which may well be a contributory cause of the frequent success of these marriages). Despite her faithlessness, her incalculability, despite heat and cold and the unending drudgery, the sea always lures them anew. Yes, we have seen it; in spite of mines and submarines and disguised cruisers, without a grumble, with no large gestures, they calmly went on sailing.

Is it this, that the sea still has secrets, that none completely knows it in its mystical association with the sky, with the clouds, with the rain and the wind? Or is it the sea's tranquil, patient rhythm that, like a melody from the childhood of mankind, sounds through the generations and wakes an echo in the minds of the elect? At sea there is nothing

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to veil the movement of the heavenly bodies; the tides alternate as our Lord promised Noah after the Flood; evening succeeds morning, the new moon becomes the full moon, and the rainbow duly stretches between sea and clouds, while the curtain of the sky slowly, imperceptibly rolls the old stars down and the new up. The pole star sinks, and the Southern Cross rises up out of the sea.

There is peace upon the sea; that perhaps is its greatest secret, and its greatest attraction in a time like ours when peace simply no longer exists either between peoples or in the mind of the individual.

Yes, some morning at dawn from the wet deck to see the flying fish rise in shoals into the sea of air, to see the dolphins in their wild ecstasy forming friezes in the air as they playfully follow this new, ridiculously clumsy giant fish, or the spoutings of a great whale in the offing; one understands that these mornings, even though they be rare, compensate for much. And then to be free of the morning paper, of the telephone bell, of the barbarous bellow of the motor-car, of the howling of advertisement and sensation, of all the web of lies and hatred and envy that is called "politics" in which mankind is now so hopelessly, so desperately enmeshed. Yes, all things considered, it is quite in-

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telligible that new seamen are always forthcoming.

Pompey said the famous words that might well be the motto of all seamen and ought to be carved on every vessel that leaves safe harbourage:

Navigare necesse est, vivere non necesse.

To sail is necessary; to live unnecessary.



X. *Indian Ocean — Sumatra*

COLOMBO lies behind us, and we have already lost the coast of Ceylon to view and the scent of cinnamon from our nostrils. In a few days the coast of Sumatra will emerge; first a troop of rocky islands bristling with palms sent out into the sea as skirmishers, then in the background the land, mighty as a continent, guarded by breakers, with cloud-veiled peaks, distant, menacing, and savage.

There I spent three veritably adventurous years of my youth, always on the march after an invisible and evasive foe, hunting in mountains and primeval forests earth's most dangerous and noblest big game, the enraged human animal. Every day and night was full of incident. The strangest

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things were constantly happening. Time after time with delight and excitement we felt our courage, our endurance, our strength, and our patience tried to the uttermost, and if the trials were wanting for too long, then such was our impatience that we ourselves arranged little tests — as on that moonlight night at Tapa Tuan — in order constantly to satisfy our inward voice, our half-corrupt city consciousness, that we had a right to take part in that life, in that hunt, in that great, wild adventure.

Only rarely did we catch up with and encounter the enemy we hunted in conditions making such inordinate demands on our strength and endurance. But we knew nothing of disappointments then ; life was unending and next morning brought new chances.

It was much later, as the years went on and the war was carried on in memory and in dreams, that the disappointments became many and weariness a new and frequent guest. The radiant gleam vanished then, and the glory withered and never returned ; even the rare victories no longer gave the deep satisfaction that should be victory's reward. And it was not until long after that I understood the reason, understood that in the war I had lost

something irreplaceable, something inconceivably radiant, that my youth — that indefinable, imponderable thing — was worn away, had given out, had bled to death and lay buried somewhere in there on a high tableland between two volcanic cones, between the silent wall of the primeval forest and a crater lake.

What was I seeking there in that land of savagery, cruelty, and hatred? What was it to me that I should give it the best years of my youth? And strangest of all, why do those years now stand in the light of memory as the happiest of my life, as the only really happy ones, in spite of unexampled fatigues and dangers, in spite of sickness and privation of every kind, in spite of the “successes” of later times in life and in my profession?

Surely it was that we served a goddess, worshipped and loved her in our hearts without guile. Set up her altars everywhere and offered up upon them of our young hearts’ abundance. She is not of the high Olympian gods, is very slightly esteemed in the best circles, is reckoned by many only as a vagabond jade who lures the young out upon wild ways and at the last cheats them of their reward. And it is true. The goddess of adventure does lure youth, smilingly draws it on, beckons and promises; but no young man can seize her,

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never in any starry night in camp does she yield her lips to his kiss ; always she is out on the march ; in the endless times of waiting in ambushes and in battle she, unseen, is very near. But when the victory is won she has fled, and she is only found again when new goals beckon, new toils and perils are at hand.

Here follow some pages from the book of youth.

P A R T I I

RATTAN
THE FLYING FOXES



XI. *Rattan*

IT once happened — it was long ago — that we found ourselves in a place quite isolated from “the world,” three white men and sixty Amboynese soldiers. The usual Aceh trio, the Captain, the Lieutenant, and the Doctor, out with a column on a six weeks’ expedition to clear a particular area of insurgent bands. This time it was on the west coast of northern Sumatra, more precisely in the province of Gunung Daya by the estuary of the river Maronya. Tropical coast country with mile-wide mangrove swamp; but at its mouth the river had thrown up a sandy island, a bit of real beach in the midst of the endless swamp. A beach with sand and shingle and stones on which the waves rolled in, and the line of the thundering surf was white and

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fresh, out there where the long, imperceptible swells first felt the firm ground of Sumatra after their journey of thousands of miles. What did it matter that it was the Indian Ocean that lay stretched before us in its shining blue infinity? Even though it aroused our half-quenched longing for darker seas, even if it called up from the depths memories and feelings out of place and dangerous in this land of war and hatred, for us three tired white men it was the sea, it was refreshment and rest.

It was really a pretty and a restful spot we had found for our bivouac after our ten hours' march through the swampy forest. Open towards the sea, with long grass and a few solitary big trees, and shut in by the edge of the forest on all other sides.

Our conversation had slipped into a discussion about the so-called "humanity" in modern warfare, and Halbertsma, the Captain, took a strong line against the whole idea and maintained that war and all it involved were always "humane"; that is to say, human. "The history of war reflects the history of the human race no less than any other phase of civilization." The Doctor and the young Lieutenant had protested faintly, and we were too tired to argue.

Halbertsma stretched out his legs luxuriously

and deftly rolled himself a cigarette in the approved Javanese way. He threw a glance up at the tall, spare Achehan who hung swaying by his bound wrists from a bough of a big fig tree a few paces from the spot where we were lying. The tips of his big toes just touched the ground.

“He’s holding out longer than most, that fellow,” remarked the Captain, and we looked more closely at the scene which we had forgotten in the heat of argument — it was such an everyday occurrence here.

The Achehan was clad only in a pair of short soiled linen breeches; the upper part of his spare brown muscular body was naked, and the sweat ran in little parallel streaks down from his face on to his chin and neck and over the transverse ridges of his ribs. His long, black, ragged hair clung dripping to his head.

Every minute or so his torso was convulsed with violent spasms that followed one another in volleys or in a succession of short irregular jerks like rapid fire, while knees and wrists and toes were stretched to the utmost in their desperate attempt to find foothold on the supporting ground.

He kept his eyes shut; his lips muttered uninterruptedly in unvarying rhythm and tone the traditional prayer: “*La illàha illa Allàh.*”

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There was on that dark face the far-away, set expression which only trance or death bestows, the permanent, authentic lineaments which remain behind when all accidental reactions of earthly expression are cleared away, when smiles and laughter and weeping, fear and anger and dream are alike remote.

He had been hanging in that uncomfortable position for a good hour and a half, ever since we had arrived in camp.

The Captain put a few questions to him in Achehan, but got no answer, and we lay for a while in silence smoking our cigarettes.

The men were busily engaged with the usual camp duties, the building of huts and the cooking of rice.

They went about in small parties, half-undressed, cut branches with their swords and cleared away grass and stones where the huts were to stand. Smoke was already rising cheerfully from many small fires on which the blue pots stood boiling, each on its three stones.

Many of the men were disporting themselves in the water, and the splendid bodies with their warm brown skin fell into natural harmony with the pure colour-scheme of the hour of the day.

The sun was close to the horizon, and now came those strange moments when all is transformed; a gleam, a transfigured light fell upon sky and land and sea; it was as if a new word of power had been spoken and all things earthly had been cleansed afresh.

All earth's muddy and imperfect colours grew iridescent, as though they had emerged for the first time from the newly created sea, as when the young sun's rays were refracted on the first day in the luminous green wave-crests of the open sea, and the colours of the solar spectrum were created and flung out into jubilant space.

On land all outlines became preternaturally sharp, all the details of the landscape disengaged themselves, and every leaf, every blade of grass, every insect, became an entity which in lines clear-cut as an intaglio burned itself into the memory, never to be forgotten.

The sky towered cloudless and immaculate, unattainably remote and perfect as a radiant dream of rose and orange mother-of-pearl.

The sea shifted in an instant, more swiftly than sense and thought could follow, through a hundred blue and bluer shades, through indigo and azure and ultramarine over into purple violet, and there

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it lay, as under a self-luminous softly swaying silken carpet, in tense and breathless expectation of what was to come.

And from the shell of heaven the sun dropped like a ripe and heavy pearl, moon-white and mild, deeply luminous behind its nacreous film, down upon the sea's stretched silken cloth; rested there a last dying moment, slowly weighed down the silk, and sank into the unseen depth.

Then the sea lost its phosphorescent gleam, the white lilies of the surf lost their festal sheen; the hot gold lacquer glow receded from the brown bodies, which in the last seconds had stood quite still gazing fixedly at the miracle of light that was being enacted; from substantial, plastic, naked Tritons, the swiftly advancing night transformed them into dim silhouettes, sea shadows questing for the land.

The rose of heaven darkened; the spell was lifted, but the peace of evening now rested over our little island in the swamps. The fireflies quickly lighted up their little starry sky for all the things that creep in the grass and among the bushes; the fires began to glow; the forest was no longer forest, but the black wall that divided us from our past and our future.

The sounds of the night awoke; far off, birds'

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cries and the roaring of nocturnal beasts and the creaking of trees ; nearer, the song of cicadas and grasshoppers ; and very near the tiny fiddles of the mosquitoes within an inch of our ears.

We were still lying on the grass, full fed and in clean clothes, aware of the dewy fragrance of a thousand flowers. Every leaf hung perfectly still. A flying squirrel dropped down from a tree in its gentle curve, natural and silent as a falling leaf.

Still the Achehan hung from the tree, and his three bound companions still sat by their fire guarded by soldiers with drawn swords. I marvelled that this spectacle did not in fact break the peace and quiet happiness of the evening. That a human being was now suffering his third hour of torture in our immediate neighbourhood did not in the least disturb our capacity for enjoying our bodies' lassitude and rest. The whole thing seemed unreal and irrelevant ; it was as if one could not take in that a man had been hanging there for hours by his bound wrists, hung up at the orders of white men, western Europeans ; a man seized when engaged in peaceful work on his own land and only suspected of knowing in which direction an armed band of his fellow-countrymen had fled. His sole crime was that he refused to be a traitor.

Time went on and the rhythm of his prayers in-

creased in speed. The Captain still got no answer. Halbertsma began to lose patience. He shouted an order in Malayan, and presently an Amboynese Corporal came up hurriedly and saluted. In his hand he carried a rattan a good three feet long and half an inch thick. Again the question was put to the Achehan, slowly and clearly in irreproachable Achehan. No answer; not a sign that the sound had reached his ears.

“We must see if we can’t bring him back out of his ecstasy,” said the Captain, and turning, nodded to the Corporal.

“*Duapuluh*,” he said curtly.

The Corporal took off his tunic, stretched his naked, muscular torso, and for a moment made the rattan whistle through the air, then assumed a sort of ceremonial attitude, and suddenly the first stroke fell — a sharp whine ended in a dull thud; and then a silence as if all the world had been murdered by the blow.

He handled the rattan with the dexterity of a juggler. There was perfect harmony and beauty in his every movement.

With great art he knew how to put the united force of arm and shoulder into the swing, and yet in the last breathless instant, in the last thousandth of a second, to check it at the wrist so that

the suppleness of the rattan came into play and its extreme end fell with many times increased weight and severity on the quivering muscles.

“ *Satu — dua — tiga —* ” he counted in a high, quite expressionless voice as the blows fell. By the eleventh or twelfth stroke the linen breeches, which had once been white, began to show dark red patches. The Achehan’s brown face became more and more grey, the tempo of his prayers rose to a paroxysm, but he gave no sign of communicativeness.

We all three lay motionless, watching what was going on. Most of the soldiers had come nearer and now stood in groups round the place of execution, playfully subjecting every single stroke to expert criticism, and it must be admitted that the great majority of them earned almost unanimous approval.

“ *Duapuluh,*” sounded at last, and the Corporal stopped, slid his left hand caressingly up and down the rattan, and looked with a self-complacent air round the circle, which gave him their applause by many significant and expressive gestures.

Again we heard the Captain’s question. No reaction.

“ *Lagi duapuluh.*”

Once more the rattan sang and whistled through

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the air, and once more the dull thuds came in monotonous succession, and the level voice recorded the count calmly and without modulation as though it were only announcing the passage of the seconds.

It has a peculiar effect upon one's sick nerves, that sound of heavy cane falling recurrently on human flesh. It created about us another atmosphere, another world; it tore us loose from time and place and reality and carried us out into immeasurable palpitating space. One's mind was sore, one's nerves so painfully sensitive. It was like lying bound among ants, and next moment it was as if the universe were filled with calm, grave eyes that all saw clearly through our hearts.

All other senses died; we became dumb and blind, but on the other hand so painfully quick of hearing that these thuds grew and grew in strength, swelled and swelled to a rolling thunder, to the gong-beats of the day of judgment, whose echo roared through our brains, went in storm waves down through the spinal marrow and out along all the nerves to their utmost ramifications, and produced cold tremors of the skin that made us clammy and pallid as corpses.

"*Ampatpuluh!*" boomed out from eternity, as with the voice of the cherubim; and from far off

another voice cut through time with the clash of swung swords:

“ *Lagi duapuluh!* ”

And again the storm of gong-beats raged, and the mutter of the prayers, in which the three bound comrades had now joined, had become a chant, a litany, had swelled into a rhythmic, eternally ringing cry of distress to Allah; and it was as if we heard the cry of the generations through the ages to their god.

We were incapable of moving, dry-mouthed and with a dried-up feeling down through throat and bowels.

“ *Annampuluh!* ”

“ *Lagi duapuluh —* ”

The hurricane had subsided; it had now grown quiet in our minds; the whole thing was like a squall that had passed over us far away to distant regions; it was already long ago; something mythical; an ugly tale from long-vanished times. No, now we were marching under the stars across open waving grass plains to the playing of pipes and flutes; and now we were sailing swiftly down mile-wide rivers along fragrant banks, out towards the morning flush and all the morning's loveliness; and then we came out upon the blue waves of the open sea and were greeted by the fresh foam of the

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breakers, and all the palms of the shore whispered and glittered in the morning sun — until a shriek from a soul that was being slain: “ *Ampun, Tuan, ampun!* ” called us out from our hypnosis, and we saw the tall Achehan lying broken and crumpled up in a heap in the grass, and the sweating Corporal drying his rattan and going off in triumph with his laughing and joking comrades.

Again a world had fallen to pieces, a microcosm was splintered and crushed under the heel. Again the flesh had won a painful victory over the spirit.

Later in the evening five big Achehan praos, requisitioned in advance, landed on our beach; they were to carry us in the course of the night up along the coast to a place where our spies informed us a big band lay encamped. It was the intention if possible to get there before dawn and attack them before it grew light. When it appeared that there was less room in the boats than we expected, Halbertsma had the four prisoners cut down there on the beach in the sunset without formalities of any kind. The men quarrelled as to which of them should have the pleasure. It was too dangerous to take these desperate four along on a night rowing-expedition across the open sea, and to turn them loose was not to be thought of, since with their

knowledge of the country they would probably be able to warn the band of our coming.

As we sat in the boats and were slowly leaving the land, the Captain said suddenly :

“ What do you, as Teutons and civilized people, think about what you have seen this evening? — Are you scandalized? *Sittlich entrüstet?* ” he went on, when I did not answer.

“ Did it make your short-sighted eyes smart? Was it like nettles on your thin-skinned conscience? Do you suppose I’ve forgotten the first time I myself stood face to face with the primitive? But console yourself, mijnheer: it is only quite superficial layers in the consciousness that are scratched by impressions like these. The modern equipment you carry is no good here where the bullets fly. Chuck it away, man, and find another of older and proven steel.

“ To do one’s duty, happen what will, to carry through one’s job to the bitter end in spite of everything and everybody, by cunning and lenity or with flame and sword — the watchword is as old as Abraham, but I know of none better; and it holds good when a man must have something to grip fast to.

“ And human life, you say! Sapristi, my dear chap; these brave fellows have gone to paradise,

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where houris await them — and *the sons stand ready!* ”

“ Hip, hip, hurrah! ” whispered Van Tricht, who had heard the Captain’s speech (there could be no loud talking in the boats).

“ *Denn alles, was entsteht, ist werth, dass es zu Grunde geht,* ” he quoted further — and then we flew into the roaring white wall of the surf, emerged on the still, immeasurable level, and softly glided forward towards the evening glow.



XII. *The Flying Foxes*

Torches, night, a beach with little bullets whining.
Men screamed and fell ; courage and discipline broke ;
Somewhere close by, Death folded his wings in the
darkness,

Tarrying for a fateful instant in his flight.
The firing line wavered ; I felt within my being
Something give way, surrender and bow down.
A warm stream flowed out ; blood ? Nay, hope rather ;
Out of the ground the chill crept up to my heart.

A BIG flight of kalongs, flying foxes, passed over
beneath a cloudless, copper-red sunset sky.

No one knows whence they come, from what dim
cave in the rocks or jungle-covered temple ruin
they adventure forth when the light fades ; they
appear somewhere in the aerial ocean, suddenly,

singly, three or four at a time, and they fly into the range of vision, majestically, soundlessly soaring, show for a few moments their strange spectral silhouettes against the evening sky, and are gone, lost in the immensity of space. But others constantly succeed; it is a stream, a drift, a migration along one of the invisible highways of the air.

Captain Halbertsma the Frieslander, Lieutenant Van Tricht, and I were sitting on a half-rotten tree-trunk which had been washed up on the beach, and staring in silence up at the big flying beasts. Oddly enough, it was not our habit to sit silent, for, by a chance certainly unique in Acheh in those days, it happened that we three officers who were out together for weeks on jungle expeditions were all of literary tastes; all three were interested in books and the world of books and had read a great deal. I always went into the jungle with the poems of Keats in my pocket, and many a night in camp I have fallen asleep in the middle of the "Ode to a Nightingale" or the "Eve of St. Agnes."

That we were silent that evening was due to the fact that we were tired after a long day's march, and that we had just come to the end of a long discussion of Hamlet, about whom, as we know, there is a great deal to say. But there was also another, an inward and deeper ground for our taciturnity.

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Captain Halbertsma had half an hour before unexpectedly ordered the execution of four prisoners we had had with us for some days. And it had been done; they had been taken a hundred paces along the beach and cut down *sans façon* while the sun still stood low in the sky.

In those days we were not very scrupulous about human life in Acheh, and it was an everyday occurrence for prisoners to be killed, since it was often equally impossible to turn them loose or to take them along. But as a rule it was done under cover of a certain amount of pretence; for example, they would be given an opportunity to escape and fall into a previously prepared trap. The result was the same; but this quite cold-blooded putting to the sword was a little too much like murder; and it was this that made us silent.

Reports from trustworthy spies had come in during the course of the day that Haji Kentapan, the sole surviving important leader of revolt in the province, was encamped on the coast some miles to the northward at Kwala Seumanja, a river mouth.

Halbertsma's plan was to row up in the course of the night along the coast in native sampans with five platoons — that is to say, a hundred men — and land them in the triangle between the river and the sea. It was a clear and simple plan, presenting

only two difficulties. In the first place it would be by no means easy on a moonless night to find the right landing-place, and in the second it was at many points very difficult and dangerous to make a landing through the surf on the open coast. A third difficulty — namely, the question of the prisoners, whom it would have been altogether too risky to take along in the boats — had, as I have said, been solved in a decisive fashion.

With regard to the landing the Captain depended unconditionally on our Achehan pawangs — pilots, or, more correctly, helmsmen; a position which stands high in honour among the Achehan population of the west coast and goes by inheritance from father to son through generations.

The sun had disappeared, and tardily the glow had followed it. The passage of the flying foxes continued; now they could only just be made out when they flew low over our heads. They were going north like us, and Van Tricht regarded this as a good omen. There was something ghostly, something occult about that soundless twilight flight of innumerable big beasts that came out of the empty sky and seemed to be going on into infinity; it was as if our own secret longings had taken this nocturnal form and were making their way northward to peace and coolness. Soon we could no longer see

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them, though we knew that their soundless, invisible procession went on all through the night. And Venus stood mighty and radiant in the west and built her own little bridge over the waters out towards a realm of distance and dreams to which only they have access who can walk "on the narrow and trembling plank."

It was still; there was not a ripple on the water, but a heavy swell was running; the sea rose oily, as if moved by deep, secret forces, in rounded hills, and sank softly in huge flat dales, while its polished surface retained the power to reflect. The big sampans rose and fell and slid like chips up and down along the ever changing slopes. The night came quickly, and it was very dark, but still and warm.

The Captain, the Lieutenant, and I sat together in the after part of one sampan; the big open middle space was filled by a platoon with their arms; right forward and high up on the caravel-like bows sat the six Achehan oarsmen, whose measured, muffled chant, attuned to the melancholy of the night and the sea, now and then reached our ears. We soon lost sight of the other sampans. None of us talked, but, diverse as were our thoughts, the same disquiet went storming through our minds.

Halbertsma, the old Pathfinder, who had given

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the best years of his youth and manhood to this game, was turning over his plan in his mind and trying to envisage and master its thousand details, all the unforeseen things that might happen and the modifications they would involve. He had a great name in those years in Aceh as a guerrilla leader, and with justice; he had the power of synthesis of the born tactician, the rare and remarkable gift of being able to foresee his opponent's movements, to set out the whole complicated mathematical problem before his eyes as on a slate, and work out the answer clearly and inevitably.

After some time he stretched himself and yawned heartily, sighed deeply a few times, and began to mutter something about its being time to stop this Acehan game; he was getting too old to go on tramping day after day the mountains and forest morasses of this land. He was getting near the age for promotion to major, and would have no objection to sitting on a horse while the other fellows tramped.

It was only that he had sworn to himself not to leave the province of which he had been in absolute control both civil and military for eight years, before his old friend Haji Kentapan — the last of the irreconcilables — had submitted or gone the same way as countless others. Hundreds of weary

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miles he had covered on the trail of that wily old fox. He saw before him the winding forest paths, the white coral roads; the mountain ridges he had climbed rose up before him in an endless perspective like waves on the open sea. It sometimes became a nightmare in which he eternally clambered on all fours up steep mountain slopes but never made an inch of progress. With an accursed combination of luck and cunning the Haji had always escaped him and in the last months had now and then even taken the offensive and had laid a couple of successful ambushes, by which he had again come into possession of modern rifles and ammunition and, worse still, had regained so much of his waning prestige that not a few young hotheads had joined him.

“*Maar God verdomme — en God verdomme!*” swore Halbertsma, with the profound conviction with which a Dutch soldier can swear; “this time the net’s too close; this is the end, my friend.” And both Van Tricht and I felt convinced that this was the end.

What Van Tricht was thinking about I had no need to ask him, nor would he have given me a true answer to my question. It was his first campaign, the first time he would face fire, desperate resistance, and well-armed foes. I knew exactly how he

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felt. I knew that dentist's-waiting-room sensation myself. But what was torturing Van Tricht was not the dread of battle; it was the fear of not appearing quite easy and natural before the Captain, the veteran to whom he looked up. His wish was to let the Captain see how matter-of-fact, how philosophically cool and detached was his attitude to the whole expedition; one was an officer and a tactician — human weaknesses simply did not exist. Van Tricht was twenty-one, I twenty-seven, and Halbertsma thirty-six. But he had all the symptoms: slight shivering fits, frequent yawns, restlessness alternating with a certain state of abstraction; one needed to be neither doctor nor veteran to make the diagnosis.

Myself, I had been taking a hand at this game for two years and was in some degree inured and adjusted to the most incredible things. I no longer ducked involuntarily when there was shooting. But I realized that what was now in front of us would be something different from what I had hitherto seen. A desperate band of men, cut off from escape, well armed, hunted for years like mad dogs in all directions through the province, under a shrewd and experienced leader — I could easily imagine how this fight was likely to go.

What does one do when one is suddenly called

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upon to spend a dark night in a sampan on the open sea off a savage and surf-guarded coast? What does one think about as one sits among armed soldiers, armed to the teeth oneself, on the way to a planned attack on a body of men who, strictly speaking, were only defending their liberty and their country?

Was I really anything other or better than a member of a band of mercenaries under a conscienceless condottiere who sold himself to the highest bidder? An uncomfortable thought, and it was as if the goddess of adventure for a moment lost a little of her radiance. Of course I was; I was surely one of the pioneers of Western civilization — the white man's burden and all that. If only one could really in one's heart believe in that civilization, then all would be well.

Fortunately, when young, one easily throws off depressing reflections of this kind; but I thought of my childhood and youth, which I seemed already to have left so unbelievably far behind. Women I had raved about, with whom I had fancied myself in love, and now remote and vanished as if they were of another era and another world. Comrades and friends still sitting there at home and drawing their little circles. Childhood's home in the little town, Sunday afternoon by the deserted little sun-

drenched harbour, with its never forgotten odour of rotten seaweed and snails and tar on the balks bubbling soundlessly in the sun. Then time itself seemed to stand still as in the palace of the Sleeping Beauty, and the first second of eternity had begun. The film kept changing; I was not in a state to fix my mind on anything; my restlessness and the doubt in my mind were too strong. Evenings with friends, full of poetry and loyalty, light nights on the sea or in the woods, the nightingale! Long swimming-excursions in warm summer seas; skating-races across frozen fjords, lapwing's cry and blackbird's fluting — *Wel, God verdomme!*

Image after image, youth strode forward in an endless pageant, and to me now it seemed a thing exalted and solemn, but for ever lost.

All the first disappointments of youth, its defeats and humiliations, its sensations of loneliness and emptiness which had driven me out were forgotten. Only the happiest moments, the pure enjoyments, the brief triumphs, reached me from afar with the clearness of a vision; and my anxious soul was filled with wonder that I had been able to relinquish all this. To relinquish, yes, was it not rather a betrayal, a desertion of the colours? What was it I had sought that life at home could not give? The distant, the wild, the unexpected — in

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short, adventure? I scorned myself, bitterly, contemptuously. As if adventure of a lovelier, a more audacious, a subtler sort did not lie in wait round every street-corner for him who had eyes and heart for it.

Ah well, now it was in sight; now I stood before the castle in the princess's city, and the way lay as of old over high waves and through white breakers; and the old dragons lay, sure enough, spewing fire, on guard before its portal.

Now I must go forward along the steep and narrow path — whether it led to the stars would appear later. There was nothing but darkness ahead.

The night wore on; one shook oneself and drew oneself up and yawned, and shivered a little with cold though it was as hot as in a forcing-house. A close but quiet rain began to fall that felt lukewarm on the skin. No one said anything; we heard only the monotonous crooning of the oarsmen. The long, caressing lick of the swell on the planks of the prao and the deep stifled gurgle of the water cloven by the keel. Many of the men were seasick; the pawang's figure standing behind us high over our heads by the steering-oar on the little after-deck was just perceptible in the darkness.

With what astounding faith life resigns itself to matter, entrusts itself to the irresponsible forces

that hold sway in space! With what solemn confidence people set out on perilous night journeys with death before their eyes and for their goal! The death before which our thoughts come so helplessly to a standstill and which we yet summon and inflict on one another with such thoughtless unconcern. What prodigious short-sightedness, what lack of patience, of natural sympathy and understanding impelled us! What could we hope to attain, what profit for our souls, by this hurry?

How many of them, of all the youth rising and falling here in the light sampan, would make the leap out into the darkness before the next day broke? Could it be the purpose that I myself was selected, marked for the spear-point? The purpose! Was there a purpose? Was it possible, was it after all conceivable, in spite of the many clever heads, that there was a judge who knew how incorruptibly to weigh souls? And if it were so, what was the great criterion? Was it then simply, as Halbertsma said, that the purpose was that we were to do our duty through thick and thin in every situation, without philosophizing? But how, then, when one's inward voice preached revolt against the outward authority's behests? We could not all be called to martyrdom.

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I fancy we all three dozed a little, until I was awakened by Halbertsma's voice:

"What are you dreaming about, Doctor? The meaning of life and the plan in nature?"

He tried to speak ironically, but his voice had a peculiar depth and resonance which made me suspect that he had been out in these depths himself.

"You know I have long since given up speculating about the deeper correlations of things. I stick to the externals, which are far simpler. In my view the purpose of this bit of fun tonight is that I may be promoted major, that Van Tricht may get the Order of Wilhelm, and that you, Doctor, may have tonight a supreme chance to show us that your will is stronger than your instincts — which indeed I don't for a moment doubt. What the purpose is for the others" — he pointed down at the sleeping soldiers and the oarsmen — "has always been beyond my comprehension."

I did not answer, and a little later Van Tricht said suddenly: "Now he's turning in," and his voice was still trembling with excitement about the Order of Wilhelm the prospect of which the Captain had held out.

He was right; the prao was changing course at right angles, and we were going in towards the in-

visible coast. It was two o'clock, and the rain had ceased. Halbertsma exchanged a few words in Achehan with the pawang.

"He thinks we're where we ought to be; there's a sort of sixth sense these fellows have, and we've nothing to do but trust to it."

We closed in to the land, and before long we could hear the noise of the surf quite near, breaking on the sandy but very steep coast. The oarsmen stopped rowing, and we lay for a moment rolling and heaving; then suddenly we saw as it were a wall rise up in front of us. It came up like an eruption out of the black sea, with a shining white crest gleaming like snow upon the mountains; it rose and towered, strange and frightening, in the darkness, and all at once it fell crashing in storm and thunder, and its ruins covered the sea with whiteness as far as we could see.

Then the pawang's voice sounded like a whistling away above our heads. His arms battled in insane gestures, his body swung forward and back at violent speed, and the oarsmen took their time from him and rowed as if they were trying to get through before the gates of the kingdom of heaven were closed for good. The prao flew forward over the foam-covered flat.

"Look astern," Halbertsma's voice sounded

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calmly in my ear, and there was the wall again, but now behind us; it had risen from its ruins, high and ill-boding, but it did not stand still; it came nearer, it slid across the sea with enormous speed, and we stared as if bewitched, up at its white, curled summit.

An oar broke, and the prao swung a little out of its course.

“All hands hang on to the gunwale!” roared Halbertsma, but his voice was swallowed up in the uproar, for in the same instant we were overtaken, saw the mighty wave curving hollow and gleaming in over our vessel, and we went under in a foaming swirl, were wiped like a bad joke off the tablets of the sea, were swallowed up and disappeared in the perilous place where the elements meet and fight. But most of us had instinctively held fast to the sinking prao, which was flung just far enough in not to be sucked back; and, half-drowned, seasick, and senseless, we reached the shore.

Here one platoon under a Sergeant stood waiting for us. There was no trace of the other three sampans, which must have missed the landing-place. When our party was fallen in, it appeared that two men from our sampan were missing, which was getting off cheaply.

The beach was wide and quite steep; it shone

white in the darkness. After a few minutes the advance guard which had been sent out came back, and the Sergeant whispered to the Captain, which seemed absurd, since the tumult of the waters at that moment would have drowned the loudest of shouts. But nerves were overstrained; everything happened with strange irrationality as from the subconscious, but on that account with a certain sleep-walker-like precision.

The enemy were in sight; there was no doubt. Two small fires were burning on the beach; quite faintly glowed the flame which betrayed the presence of man, and by the faint light we made out the shadows of a couple of sentries who were sitting on their hunkers and chatting, obviously without a suspicion of what was already quite near. They were only a few hundred paces away when the column halted.

The Captain briefly gave Van Tricht his orders. The Lieutenant with one platoon was to execute a turning movement and cut off the retreat inland along the river bank. The orders were to creep with the utmost caution to a position twenty paces from the enemy, to form in firing line at right angles to the river bank and the beach respectively, and to begin a rapid fire when the Captain gave the signal.

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In the course of a quarter of an hour this was accomplished. The soldiers were just outside the circle of light from the fires. Not a sound was heard; the monotonous roar of the breakers had the effect of silence. The tension had reached its climax; one felt it as a vapour, a mist before the eyes; it was as though the air had become dense and no longer fit for breathing. Halbertsma and I stood up; the men lay in firing line.

Suddenly a whistle sounded short and sharp, an alien sound in the jungle and on the river, more ill-boding than the tiger's snarl; and at the same instant came the first volley from forty rifles — a peal, a crash in the night — and all silence and peace, all the rest of sleeping nature seemed destroyed for ever. Tongues of flame shot out of the earth from all sides, and the air grew full of wailing, long-drawn sounds.

I felt myself sinking deep in the bottom of a crater, while frightful forces released themselves; my eyes saw only flames, and my ears heard mighty hammer-blows; my nostrils were filled with the volcano's breath. I stood for a moment senseless, paralysed, and noticed as it were a chill that seemed to proceed from the earth itself rising up through my feet. It reached my knees, and they lost all rigidity, all their power to support me; I sank

down on my knees, slack in every joint, and felt something in me give way.

But it was as if the contact with the cold ground gave me back my senses. I saw Halbertsma quite near, walking restlessly behind the firing line, four, five steps forward and as many back at a curiously abrupt parade pace. Once I saw him bend down on one knee, but immediately straighten himself up with a jerk followed by a somewhat exaggerated stiffening of his head and neck.

The enemy's fire was surprisingly powerful and well maintained, and our Javanese soldiers had a strong inclination to increase the distance; they crept like snakes constantly backward; it was for the sake of example that the Captain and I had to stand up, though Heaven knows I longed for the earth and cover. But never have I understood the Antæus myth so inwardly as that night.

I had scarcely touched the earth before I felt a wave of warmth welling through my body; I became flaming red in the darkness; my face and neck glowed, and I now stood buoyantly on my legs and stared defiantly out into the empty dark, while the sweat streamed out of every pore. I gripped the revolver in my hand, and then I felt a cool serenity and peace sink into my inmost being.

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My nerves had given way for a moment; my will had been paralysed; well, that was irrevocably over. I knew it could not happen any more. I felt myself invulnerable. Master of myself and therefore of the world, clad in invisible armour stronger than triple steel.

The firing was still brisk, but soon the shots came more seldom from the headland where the small fires burned; some few still occurred at long intervals. Halbertsma had three more volleys fired, to dot the "i," as he said, and then gave the order to cease fire; but for some time scattered shots still came from the soldiers, who in their tremendous nervous tension simply could not check their reflexes at the word of command.

And silence again reigned over the beach, a silence of death as over ash-covered crater rims. A typhoon had risen in the night and whirled in its insane dervish dance upon this headland, till brains were scattered and hearts had hammered themselves to death. Now it had grown still.

Torches were lighted, the troops formed a big closed circle, and the camp was searched with the utmost caution. Then we saw a strange, an appalling sight.

Two figures rose slowly and staggering behind one of the small atap-roofed huts that had given

shelter to the band. One was a quite young, tall and thin Achehan, one of whose arms hung shattered, but with the other he held his klewang. The other was an old man with a long, thin, grey beard and with the venerable green turban which announced that he was Haji, had knelt by the Prophet's grave at Mecca. A shot had struck him in the face and carried away his upper lip and front teeth, so that it looked as if instead of a mouth he had a deep blood-red gorge which gave him a hungry and bestial appearance.

The two drew together for a moment — we could not shoot since we were standing in a circle — and with a howl of rage and scorn of death they both suddenly sprang forward towards one point of the circle; fortunately not where I was standing; I would have hated to meet them blade to blade. But we saw the klewangs flash in the torch-light, we heard the clash of steel on steel, and three or four times the other duller sound which one knows from slaughter-houses — that which comes when sharp steel goes down into flesh and bone. One saw shadows leap and dive and fall over, and all was still.

They were Haji Kentapan himself and his only surviving son.

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Halbertsma had conquered. The goal was attained. Yes, it was over; victory was ours, complete; none had escaped. There they now lay all round about on the wet sand and in the long grass, in the accidental, the heedless and indecent postures that death assumes, a last scornful smile at our little prejudices and conventions.

We had conquered. The enemy was annihilated, wiped out; the old Haji would never again devise ambushes, no more terrorize his fellow-countrymen, rob them of their young women and their *Sedathi* boys, no more hypnotize them with his sanctity, his wisdom, and the myth that had grown up round his exploits in the holy war against "the Company."

A period of the history of the province was over, and nothing any longer hindered its triumphant forward march towards "civilization."

I had been at work for a couple of hours with our wounded — we had nine men hurt — and when I had finished, the night was over and I looked about me for the two others.

I found Van Tricht sitting on a fallen tree up in the grass; he was staring with vacant eyes out into the pearl-grey morning; he looked at me and

said only: "That was that, Doctor," and sighed several times like a young hound, but was obviously in no sort of intoxication of victory or mood of triumph. I fancy that for the moment he had even forgotten the Order of Wilhelm.

Halbertsma was standing down by the river bank where our three dead lay side by side. His face was turned to the light, and I saw that his features were grey and furrowed; it was as if a harrow had passed over them; there was no light in his eyes; his glance showed only emptiness and fatigue.

He was, like the rest of us, in the power of reaction.

"Yes, Doctor, there they lie. For eight years I've been hunting the old man. I may say I've put all I possessed of brain and energy into the chase. Was it worth it?

"Why doesn't one feel happy and content, Doctor, can you tell me that? Why can we no longer take out the peacock feathers and swagger? Why the devil can we no longer rejoice with an upright heart over victory?"

I could not answer that, and we sat for a while looking at the dead.

"I'll tell you, Doctor, but it's between ourselves.

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It's because we lack faith, faith in the righteousness of our cause. The whole thing has become too complicated, and so we can no longer sing *Te Deum*. No, I feel as if it was my own youth I have killed this night; I feel like an old man."

A little while later we all three gathered for coffee, which my Sergeant had produced. The river slipped past our feet, and we gazed at the wide, gliding masses of water, always new, that were borne out towards the sea. The land breeze sprang up and fanned our faces with fragrance from the forests and mountains, from all the lovely wild country that was awakening to life.

A big party of flying foxes drove across the morning sky to southward; home to their dim rock caves or jungle-clad ruins after the night's exploits. The last stars paled. The sun rose.

Yes, the goddess of adventure is like the Aphrodite of whom the poet sings:

She is fickle, but she loves only a hero.

Heroes are rare, and the goddess of adventure is not quite so exacting as Aphrodite. But she can only love a man. Of those who will follow her lonely and wild paths she demands all — soul and body, blood and breath, given up without illusions, with-

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out promise of reward, yes, without hope. And a youth can only give of his superfluity; his courage is not more enduring than his hope.

But false she is not; she repays her faithful ones; she comes, even if late, to her lover.

She comes in memory and dreams.

But when night is on the hills, and the great voices
roll in from sea

By starlight and candlelight and dreamlight
She comes to me.

One starry night in camp when the young moon disappears and the sentry sleeps, then she comes, takes his hand, and leads him up on to "memory's silent heights." And his mind grows rich and dark as an August night glittering with shooting stars.

Or she comes in dreams with the wild elephants down along the mountain-side; beautiful and queenly she rests upon the old leader's neck. She dismounts and draws near to his camp, and he feels her lips upon his forehead. And that dream's wild and lovely starlight will shine for ever on his mind.

P A R T I I I

GOOD-BYE TO MID-JAVA



XIII. *Good-bye to Mid-Java*

THE SPECIAL charm of the tropics used in the old days — that is to say, before 1914 — to lie in the fact that capable young men rapidly reached independent positions and such power and responsibility as these involved. Now we have changed all that with our little inventions. Now the director in London or Amsterdam is in daily wireless communication with his manager in Malacca or in Java, and if there be anything the matter, he flies over himself in four or five days. Whether this will have as stimulating an effect on the capable young men as the former independence, time will show.

In the old days, too, the young man often made such a good income that he was able to retire at a

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pretty early age and live happily ever after in Montreux or Nice or San Remo, which would be impossible now. This was the great ideal of many men in the tropics, and still more of their women; and those who stayed behind felt the heat several degrees hotter and the work more exacting when they saw the lucky ones go aboard.

Meanwhile, as the years went on and the enormous strain of the war was relaxed, and particularly when the 1920's began to wind their unpleasant film of the rapidly shifting periods of crisis, we more and more frequently saw the lucky ones return, often ruined and always completely disillusioned. Europe had come to have a bitter taste for the middle-aged; indeed, on many of those who went home it acted as a deadly poison. Even without the war and its frightful consequences it would have been so to some of the lucky ones; there is in the very word "retire" something ominous for a young man. It is perhaps a question whether a man should lay down the sword before it becomes too heavy for him to brandish.

For me, too, came the day when I said my last farewell to Java — officially — but in my heart, as always before, only till next time. I do not suppose I shall ever have the courage to admit to myself that I shall never see Java again. I do not even

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know for certain where my bones would rest most easily. So deeply, literally to marrow and bone, do thirty years in the tropics disintegrate a Dane.

Yes, the day came when I took farewell of my house and garden in Canary Avenue in Old Chandi, three hundred feet above Semarang. I doubt if any street in the world can equal it in charm. This avenue, which comes to a blind end in the middle of the golf course and contains only twelve or thirteen houses, is, in contrast with many which have preserved only the name but not the trees, actually a singularly fine avenue of Canary trees (*Canarium commune*), close-set, tall, and shady trees whose stems throw out a multitude of pillars or buttresses downward to the ground. In their sun-bathed crests myriads of golden orioles and Alexander parrots keep up a perpetual flutter; the snow-white egrets come sailing in on the sea of the sunset, fold their sails, and come to anchor in the safe haven of the lofty crests. The road's cool, sun-flecked shadow swarms all day long with brown, naked Javanese children, who eagerly crush the hard canary nuts between two stones and eat the kernels, which taste like a mixture of bitter almonds and walnuts.

The avenue is unique in this: that it is the last remaining street in Java whose houses have all preserved unaltered the old colonial style which, up

to about 1910, was typical of those quarters of the towns that were inhabited by the more well-to-do European population. Konigsplein in Batavia, Bodjong in Semarang, and Simpang in Surabaya were thirty years ago pure examples of this style which so splendidly suited the climate of Java and the patriarchal spirit prevailing between the wealthy white man and his brown servants.

They are big, deep, usually one-storeyed houses in a sort of cross between the Greco-Roman and old Javanese styles. Wide, roofed-in verandas run all round the house; the front veranda, to which a stately marble stairway leads up from the carriage-drive, occupies the whole width of the house, and its roof is supported by six or eight magnificent massive columns, often in pure Doric or Ionic style. The ceiling is lofty, and the thick teak-wood timbers are often no more than two feet apart. They were not sparing of material when those houses were built. The floors are covered with big polished marble slabs that have a cool and stately effect. Through the middle of the house to its full depth runs a long, wide passage joining the front and back verandas; on both sides of this are the doors to the bedrooms, the workroom of the master of the house, the nursery quarters, and so on, four to

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twelve in number according to the size of the house. The front veranda, or front gallery, as the Dutch call it, is used for the reception of visitors; and the often enormously large back veranda (in a house I once occupied it was sixty-five by a hundred feet) is the dining-room and the family's gathering-place in the evening.

The walls are whitewashed, and formerly were usually decorated only with growing plants and old Chinese plates and dishes. Big palms in more or less ornamental pots and tubs transform the lofty rooms into tropical gardens. The houses are as a rule surrounded on all sides by handsome well-kept lawns, and high shrubs conceal the extensive out-buildings which contain the kitchens and stables and the servants' quarters, swarming with naked brown children and redolent of highly spiced native food. "Trasi," a favourite dish of which half-rotten prawns constitute the chief ingredient, was strictly forbidden in my house.

It was cool and dim in these houses with their deep, high rooms and thick walls when one came in out of the burning heat and the blinding light. The servants moved silently on their bare feet, the rhythmic creak of the punkah was a soothing sound. Now the last punkah is displaced by irri-

tating electric fans — and most Europeans live in cramped little villas more in place in Anemone Road than on the equator.

Outside stretched the garden, which, without exaggeration, extended up to the alang-alang-clad heights with their scattered wild mango trees, and behind them one saw the sea and the ships in the roadstead of Semarang. On the other side of the avenue lay the pretty undulating plain of the golf course, surrounded and watched over by six of Java's highest and most shapely volcanic peaks, Slamet and Prauw, Sindoro and Sumbing, Ungaran and Merbabu.

Yes, though it sounds incredible, I took farewell of this garden that lay in the shadow of the volcanoes with the sea in sight. I see it most clearly before my eyes in May, at the turn of the seasons, when it was still fresh after the last rains in its deepest, its inconceivable greenness, and when mighty storm-clouds still blew up every day but dispersed without discharging their burden.

The red acacia flames and blazes in its mute, hot, month-long conflagration, and the sacred, splendid "waringin" droops its leafy masses in evergreen petrified cascades in the still, storm-charged air. The orchids hang about in the crotches, tranquilly and without bashfulness flaunting their strange,

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mysterious colours and shapes — without bashfulness because there is nothing to hide — they are sterile, and their beauty is in vain. They do not belong to our time, but are the last survivals from a long-dead and forgotten floral world — or are they the heralds, the vanguard of the last, the coming glory?

Catleyas, enormous, motionless, transient as a dream in porcelain from China's best periods, and moon orchids that hang in long rows and shed their cool white clusters out into the warm green shadow:

Whiter than the breast of the white cockatoo,
Purer than the virgin snow of the peaks.
Snowflakes — phantoms of a frozen flame of spring,
Reflection of a beauty we shall never see.

And “Miss Joachim,” who grows in the soil in hedges, and stretches her thin bare arms up yearning to the sun with an inflorescence singularly massive and mature in form and colour.

And the “scorpions,” that must have the full glow and fire of the tropic sun without any shade at all in order to unroll their long antennæ from those blossoms that are like embalmed insects of past times. The little fragrant dove-orchids whose riot of white blossom lasts only one day, but which miraculously bursts out on the same day all over

Java — all round the world along the equator, it may be.

Zinnias stand thickly in great beds with enormous opulent flowers in all the faded colours of the world, while congea climbs up about the corner of the veranda and hovers like an evening cloud of *vieux rose* against the turquoise blue of the sky.

Each in its corner of the garden stand the two foes, hibiscus and poinsettia; like the figures on Keats's Grecian urn they can never reach one another, but in the burning heat they fight day after day their silent, bloody duel. The champak tree sends its flood of hot and sweet fragrance out over the garden with every breeze; kingfishers dart above them with barbaric cries like steel-blue and cobalt-blue lightnings. Golden orioles flutter perpetually in the tops of the canary trees and flute without cessation the same brief tune of three notes: "Pawiro — pawiro," they call without ever tiring, as if it were a deserted and enchanted harem eternally calling for its vanished young sultan.

Little flocks of the small Javanese parrots swoop screaming down for a moment into the champak tree, but vanish again in furious haste and with the most despairing heart-rending cries as if they had forgotten something indispensable in the neighbour's garden. They glitter in green and red and

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yellow, but they are like monkeys ; they have nothing to forget, and they will never learn anything.

Thus lies the garden, enchanting, cool, and lovely at daybreak while the dew twinkles and under the white coolness of the moon ; but by seven o'clock in the morning it is like fire in the sun and like boiling oil in the shade.

It is only in the tropics that one's eyes are opened to nature's overwhelming opulence and prodigality. One understands here better than in the cooler zones how vegetative life has definite goals it must attain, and is prepared to pay even an enormous price for them. Quite like the great powers in the World War.

One morning at sunrise one comes out into one's garden and sees that something new has happened, something revolutionary is in progress which disturbs the fixed habits of beast and bird.

Certain termite princesses, future queens, have become nubile and must submit to the formality necessary in order that they may produce some hundreds of thousands of termites.

Is this how it happens, that the sedulous, sexless, and therefore insanely diligent workers select the required number of available princes and present them to the princesses in their subterranean dwellings? By no means. The thing is arranged in an-

other, a romantic fashion. The wedding journey of the termites exceeds in its wild and lovely flight everything we human beings have dreamed in our youngest, our most enamoured, our most godlike moments. One sees that the air is interlaced, is literally striped with swallows; the swallow population of the whole district, the whole province, seems gathered here. At first one sees nothing but their haste; there may perhaps be a few belated bats among them, but they soon fly off, dazzled and satiated. Whenever a swallow flies close by, one hears a little pop in the air as if a tiny blown-up paper bag had burst, and it is a little while before one realizes what it signifies. But gradually, as one gets the sleep rubbed out of one's eyes, one discovers that the air is full of quite large insects like small fat dragonflies, which on big transparent wings are buffeting up towards the sky in a heavy, hesitating flight, their first and last.

And now one hears a soft humming that seems to come from everywhere. One discovers that it comes from the ground, "gushes" like low-pressure steam out of numerous little holes. In the same instant when they reach the surface from their subterranean home, in the moment when for the first time they encounter the light and the green shade and the blue and radiant reflection of the sky, they

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are intoxicated, electrified, and in a dizzy mingling of love-instinct and the discoverer's ecstasy, they spread their wings for the first and only time in life and let themselves be borne upward, ever upward towards the sun, towards the burning light and the eternal blueness of the universe.

In a blind, a senseless but irresistible search for the ineffable, the supermundane, they follow the same compulsion which now and then seizes all living things — the fish shoal's pilgrimage to distant depths, the birds' enormous mass migrations, the incredible journeys of the lemmings over mountains and rivers to the sea and the lost Atlantis, and the half-forgotten exodus from house and home of human tribes and their diversion to new worlds; forgotten, but alive in countless myths which are remarkably the same in the most diverse nations.

All the seekers find one thing — death; but it is difficult not to believe that all living things that have followed their dim urge towards the light, towards the depths, towards the heights, will meet again, perhaps upon a new-formed star, where the created being is permitted to find, to reach its goal, and yet to live.

But on the brief flight of the winged white ants death lies in wait in a thousand shapes.

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Nature on earth has many strings to her bow. These myriads that in their life's brief ecstasy quest towards the sun and the sky serve as food for almost all living things, from mankind through mammals and birds to reptiles, toads, and insects. The natives collect them in great baskets and roast them as John presumably dealt with his locusts; dogs and cats, chiefly the latter, are much interested; the cats sit by the holes and gracefully strike them down with their paws as soon as they have spread their wings. It is in miniature, but if this is not tragedy — !

I have mentioned the swallows, and the greed and rapacity of these poetic birds far surpasses the hawk's and the vulture's; the fascinating sri-gunting — Princess Scissors — a very handsome jet-black bird a little smaller than a starling, with a long, bifurcated, almost lyre-shaped tail, seizes them in flight with a display of indescribable grace and elegance. The swallows and the homely “kutilan” are simple highway robbers, footpads; but sri-gunting is a knight of the road of the noblest blood.

Geckos and iguanas, lizards and toads and frogs sit next day literally filled to the lips, shapeless and bloated; the last swallowed “larong” hangs with

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half its body and the handsome wings out of their mouths. They are no further interested; they have had to give up. On the third day the stream of white ants is undiminished, but by then even the swallows must cry enough, and their thousands of sated foes sit in trees and shrubs and on the ground watching with dull eyes the unceasing swarm, all of them brothers and sisters, princes of the blood, born of a single queen.

The survivors rise and rise, but they do not reach high; when the darkness approaches with new foes, the hosts of the bats, by then the feeble wings are weary, and they sink like deflated balloons towards the earth.

Then they lose the wings that carried them on their great adventure and, helpless, they crawl blindly about in the grass, and on floors and tables in men's houses into which the light has lured them. Sometimes the wings lie in such masses that they have to be swept into heaps and shovelled out. And then come the ants, tireless, innumerable, and all night long drag away the defenceless termites.

Perhaps a single male and female save themselves from the battle of life, from the great destruction, find a hole in the ground out of which they came, and celebrate their nuptials in darkness

and quietude deep down, without torches, without the day's music, but with a dark and sultry fruitfulness, a tropical prodigality; for if tens of thousands perished on this splendid children's crusade towards light and infinity, yet there is the new queen who by a miracle came safely through the perils, capable it seems of producing life without limit; she swells up so that the rest of her body is only a tiny appendage to the perpetually productive organs; she has become the perfect egg-laying machine. And out of the egg comes the "worker," sexless, without instincts of any other kind than that which drives them to work; they do not tire, they never stop, they are only wheels in the ever running machine, which is doubly frightful because it is "alive"; and there come "soldiers," just heads with enormous saws as mandibles, blind and helpless, but they sit motionless their lives through, filling one of the entrances to the city with their heads and their monstrous weapons.

Verily this is the division of labour carried to the length of caricature. Is this what we shall attain in a hundred thousand years?

As I said, one bids farewell to all this; and is not that, rightly regarded, what one has been doing all one's life? Is it not this that one remembers best, this that constitutes the sum of remembrance?

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The day came when I had had an auction of my old handsome colonial furniture of "sono" wood, when I had handed over my patients to a young successor whom they regarded with mistrust, conveyed my dogs, greatly agitated and prepared for the worst, to the home which had rashly promised to adopt them, and had sweetened the parting with my ten brown servants with a month's extra pay.

And then one morning before dawn I drove in my car out of the town which had been mine for more than twenty years, a free man for the first time in my life.

I was out of reach of telephones, those practical little instruments which have reintroduced slavery in our time; no engagements weighed upon me, I had no debts, owed no man anything. My family was provided for; I had money enough to be able within reasonable limits to do as the spirit moved me. If it should appeal to me to cruise across the Pacific to Valparaiso and thence to fly in the "Indian Air" up along the Andes to Panama, what was to prevent me? India and Africa lay open awaiting my arrival, ready to show me their treasures, to disclose their secrets. I was, if not young, perfectly fit. In other words, the world stood open to me in a quite other and far more literal sense than when I first went out as a young man.

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Why, then, so heavy-hearted? Why was I not completely content, happy in the prospect of several years' freedom before age began in earnest to forge its chains? Had I gone too long under the yoke, as the circus horse trotted too many times round the ring? In other words, was it too late?

So freedom, health, and money are not enough to make the heart light and the mind happy — I learned that that morning.

What was it that was lacking? Youth? Yes, it may be that happiness is inseparably bound up with youth and its longing and craving, its hope. And it may be that only age bestows the ultimate peace of mind, the profound peace which is another form of happiness.

And the conscience, as it was called in the old days — we call it "*das Überich*" now, or something — and which is supposed to play a certain part. On this point there is not much to choose between the young and the middle-aged; one stifles it equally well at every age.

Perhaps one is only happy when one is working so hard that the mind forgets, that all the nerve-fibres are dulled and all the brain-cells as brim-full of the day's problems and details of work as a honeycomb of wax.

And thus one has actually lived for many years

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like so many men — well content, sometimes even so optimistic as now and then to believe that one had been of use. Too busy by day and too tired at night to begin to think — as we know, the most dangerous, and for the vast majority the most unprofitable, of all labour.

But yet with a vague and growing longing after freedom — just freedom to think and dream, to evoke and scrutinize some of the thousands of life's instantaneous pictures which the years have stored.

Is it not the case that many men at a certain age begin with wonder to discover and understand parts of their own being which hitherto had been hidden, begin to feel a vague longing to find that which really is their life's core; the truth about themselves which may lie buried somewhere in the mind like an antique work of art in the desert sands? This truth which, as Proust says in another connexion, must be tracked down and discovered as a scientist discovers a law of nature; a difficult task, and so most people live and die without ever having suspected who they really are.

But in a certain sense it was thus, as a man in search of himself, that I drove out that morning before dawn, as I had done so many times before, along the great post road which Daendels more than a hundred years ago stretched like a ribbon

across Java from west to east; that road which winds so beguilingly through the highlands of Priangan with their roaring mountain streams, their smoking volcanoes, and their motley, smiling people, which follows the coast through endless rice and sugar fields, shaded by its ancient tamarinds and animated by little brown handsomely shaped people who, dumb and contented under the yoke of tradition, have crowded this ancient thoroughfare, following their half-unconscious impulse to move like blood corpuscles in an artery.

It was in June when the east monsoon had just come through, and the nights had grown clear and cool after dry sun-scorched days; indeed, it was cold in the hours before sunrise, scarcely more than sixty degrees Fahrenheit, and that gives a dweller in the tropics much the same sensation as one had at home on a clear starry Christmas morning driving in a sleigh to early service in sixteen to seventeen degrees.

I drove eastward into the still dark gateway between the Great Bear, who in the north was dipping his ladle threateningly towards the sea, and Orion, who in the southern sky strode high over the mountain peaks on his nightly hunt in the star forests, followed by the hound with the sparkling eye. Night-birds and bats whirled every moment

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through the beams of the lamps, while the miles piled up behind us without on that account vanishing in front. But suddenly, insensibly, incomprehensibly, the eastern sky was swept clean of stars, its night-deep hue grew pale, dissolved, and up behind the distant teak forest unseen hands lifted the goblet with the morning's dimly glowing wine. The near palm-crests and the distant volcano cones showed ever clearer their elegant silhouettes, and when I drove into the ancient city of the sultans, Demak, it was morning; before I reached Japara it was scorching day.

It was *Lebaran*, the feast after the cessation of the month of fasting; all the road was filled with the festival-clad folk, and the cannonade of fireworks was like the barrages at Verdun. How comely they are, these children to whom nature has given the healthy, the natural colour which it is our pride very imperfectly to achieve in a few summer months by artificial means; who have the freest, the proudest walk of any race I have encountered! An old English author says somewhere that there are English women who suppose that they can *walk*; indeed, according to rumour, there are even Scots who labour under this delusion. There are, he says, individual Frenchwomen who have a notion of the art, but of all the women of

the world only the Spanish Creoles really know how to *walk* on this earth of ours. It is evident that this observer had never met with a Javanese woman of the Priajik class; had never seen the miraculous harmony of body and limbs which seems to transform her into a living part of the road itself, a wave upon the sea.

The Javanese, like all unspoilt people, loves festivals, and he knows how to hold protracted festival without stimulants and without noise, except for fireworks at the New Year. You do not find in Java a theoretic *equality*; the Javanese is submissive, respectful, even obsequious towards his superior, but yet self-confident, for his ancient culture gives assurance to his bearing in all company. He is courteous, perhaps the most courteous being in the world; so deep-seated is it in him that it has even divided his language into two. In Java one speaks one language to one's superiors and another to one's equals or inferiors. The poorest Javanese coolie will perhaps uphold his wounded pride with his kris, but he will never use abusive language or be coarse or rude in his bearing. There is much that nordic peoples of the highest education might learn in this respect from the Javanese peasant.

A young Danish university woman recently ad-

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mitted in a newspaper discussion at home that the modern Danish children were rude. In her view it was of no consequence, was rather an indication of a certain spiritual freshness and emancipation, "for," she said in so many words, "has politeness any other value than to make life easier for the grown-ups?"

Tut, what is one to say? One remembers something about courtesy being the strongest weapon of the weak and the fairest ornament of the strong, the foundation and first principle of all culture. But we are busy changing all that.

A Javanese will never contradict a European, and so he often lies. He is reluctant to give an answer which he knows will disappoint the questioner. Accordingly he seldom replies with a direct negative; he says "*Kurang priksa*," "I don't quite know." He never interferes with other people's business, is perhaps not spontaneously very helpful, but neither is he a backbiter or a mischief-maker.

He knows nothing of the concept "love" in the romantic sense in which north-western Europe has known it for the last hundred and fifty years, but, although a Mohammedan, he is in most cases monogamous, and marriages are as a rule for life.

He is, apart from the youngest generation, il-

literate, ignorant, credulous, and superstitious. But one seldom sees crowds of Javanese resorting to the "wise men and women" who are found there too, as the civilized Danish people to quacks and charlatans. Not that this prevents us from scornfully shrugging our shoulders at Lourdes — in other words, from sneering at *faith* and taking twaddle seriously.

His dance, music, and drama are living arts among the people and are consequently on a different plane from ours, who leave these things to professionals. In the domains of literature and pictorial art he does not at present produce anything. Do we?

The Javanese — that is to say, the Javanese peasant — should be seen on his rice field behind his plough with its yoke of buffaloes. The field is often no bigger than a good-sized room, a tiny patch of the hundreds of terraces which have been levelled with the greatest art out of the steep valley slopes so that their lovely lines repeat and emphasize in the most enchanting way the larger lines of the landscape. Plough and yoke have not changed since the reliefs at Boro-Budur came into being twelve hundred years ago. Here he reigns supreme as he adroitly leads his clumsy team through the deep mud of fertile black or red soil

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mixed with the tepid irrigation water. There he sings his ploughing song while the rains in an instant shut off the universe, turning it into a bath of foam behind thick curtains; and next moment the summits of the volcanic cones are reflected ten thousand feet below in the shining brown water of the terraces; the picture of the world is bewilderingly enhanced and its loveliness redoubled. For the water gives back the sky and the clouds and the mountains, not as a photograph, but in new and lovely wise as seen through the eyes of a painter.

One should see the Javanese women a little later when the soil of the terraces has undergone an intimate union with the water and is transformed to knee-deep, fine and homogeneous mud above which stand two or three inches of shining water; then they plant the rice.

In long rows they stand with kilted sarongs, and their bare legs deep in the warm mud that is exactly the same colour and almost at the same temperature. Bending at a graceful curve, they set the young rice plants with incredible dexterity and speed in the soft, half-liquid ooze. As if by magic, one sees the brown and violet levels turn green under the fine cobweb of the young plants. It is the tenderest of all green colours, for the newly

planted rice blade has still the etiolated, fallow tint of the cotyledon. But the tropical sun is a mighty magician. From day to day one sees the terraces change colour; with tearing haste the pale yellow-green is transformed to ever deeper and more succulent green tones, until the whole valley and the whole plain are filled with these endless "emerald velvet flats of rice" which have given the Javanese people its tranquil, patient eyes and its placid temper.

Or one should see them at the time of rice harvest, as I saw them on this June day when I drove round Mid-Java for the last time. Then in their particoloured clothes they fill the fields with laughter and song and jest, as they patiently cut the rice ear by ear with a small knife carried in the palm of the hand. Yes, every little ear of rice is taken in the hand intimately and lovingly, as if to mitigate the pain of the merciless knife. Therefore that deep gladness and free cheerfulness at harvest, which is no more felt where the corn is mown by monstrous machines, but only where the reaper and the reaped still stand close to one another; where the one still lives almost as vegetatively as the other; where in the literal sense they still have sympathy with all that grows.

Denmark, too, is an agricultural country, where

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for a thousand years an almost equally intimate relation has prevailed between the peasant and his soil. Now we have transformed our cultivation into an industry, its peasants into masters and trade-union labourers, and their girls into young ladies or "work girls." We have given them "education" — that is to say second- and third-hand knowledge of dead things — and at the same time have taken from their minds for ever the gladness and deep contentment in contact with living life. Yes, we have indeed progressed in Denmark.

But in Java, too, as in others of Asia's tropical and subtropical regions, this process has begun. Among these placid people, contented and blessed by nature, the doctrinaires of the West have begun their subversive, their undermining termite work, have sown their Loki seed.

What is it going to lead to, this grafting, carried out at ever increasing speed, of the technique of our time upon this slow, peaceful, happy people? What chaos threatens here, what abysses yawn!

Every day new cravings, new requirements, new orientation to all life's problems are being imprinted on the souls of thousands. All on the surface, all directed to externals. None can guess anything about what will be the outcome here;

only it is certain that something old and rare is being ruined, that the peace and equilibrium of a people are being destroyed, that thousand-year-old traditions, the deepest and inmost habits of life, are being shattered by our civilization like Gothic cathedrals by the German guns.

It was, as I said, *Lebaran*, and these children were making festival after the long month of fasting when nothing may be tasted between sunrise and sunset; the strictly orthodox do not even swallow their own spittle. On this day they all forgive one another their sins of the past year. They dress themselves in their festal clothes and begin again with a clean slate. A lovely thing, a goodly custom.

In Japara I saw the Regent's *kabupaten*, where Kartini and her sister were born and grew up. Later I visited Kartini's grave in the great teak forest between Rembang and Blora; there now rests that notable young woman who had such a decisive influence on the fate of thousands of Javanese women. She was one of the very first of the aristocratic Javanese women to receive a wholly western-European education. And the ideas of our civilization made so powerful an impression on her receptive soul that she was able to throw open the

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doors to millions of her sisters whom for more than three hundred years Islam had shut in.

I have often thought that the reason why this independent, original mind was so carried away by our ideas was perhaps that she learned to know them at second hand. Kartini never went to Europe, never saw with her own eyes the effects of our civilization — industrialism and its blessings; the mechanization of life, the great cities, the modern press, and the violent levelling down and the death by suffocation of the life of the spirit. She was like a Robinson Crusoe who had read Karl Marx on his island.

But there are Kartini girls' schools now in nearly every town in Java. She was scarcely twenty-five years old when she died, as the wife of the Regent of Rembang; but her spirit lives, and the movement she started is now beginning, thirty years after her death, to gather speed — perhaps an all too rapid and dangerous speed. Perhaps she, who belonged to one of Java's oldest and most noble families, only thought of the women of the upper class as "emancipated" in the modern sense. And no evidence has yet been adduced that a community of many millions can endure permanently when all are "free," when all class-

restrictions are relaxed, all traditions broken; when the whole people, all its men and women, are to try to live the difficult life "in freedom and under responsibility," as Ibsen said.

There is, so far as I know, none of mankind's great teachers or founders of religions who has ventured to propound such a doctrine.

But along that unchartered road Europe and America are now stumbling, and ancient Asia follows, blinded by the harsh light, lingeringly and hesitantly after.

Soon almost all the world's children will learn to read and write, and thus the high and fascinating but perilous world of ideas will be opened to them. A pity that for so many of them the door should thereby be shut to the world in which and for which they were born, the narrower but deeper and more intimate world of the senses; and it is not won back at the next turn of the wheel. The close and rich connexion of children and primitive peoples with the soil and all palpable things is being lost, and it is scarcely recovered in an allotment garden or on a bathing-beach.

While the tropic day glittered and burned I drove round about the six-peaked Muria, the solitary outpost to the north of the mountains of Java,

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came into the uniform shade of the great teak forest, where the monkeys play, through half-deserted Rembang, whose magnificent but empty houses bear witness to the vicissitudes of time, across Blora and the petroleum town of Chepú to Ngawi, the hottest place in Java, called by the soldiers, not without reason, Java's hell. And then began, quite imperceptibly at first, an ascent; the little rivers were more hurried, the air took on a suspicion of coolness; these were the first slopes of Lawu, and soon we were in Plaoesan, four thousand feet up, where the motor road came to an end. At this height it is eternal summer, but no longer purgatory. Thence I went on foot over the shoulder of Lawu down into the sultanate of Surakarta, sending the car with the chauffeur round Lawu to meet me at the other side of the great mountain.

I took an old white-haired Javanese with me to carry the provisions, bread, ham, two hard-boiled eggs, and a half-bottle of beer, raincoat, pipe, tobacco, and photographic apparatus. For it is cool enough in the Javanese mountains, but on the other hand not so cool that one is keen on carrying burdens. To tell the truth, in Java I seldom carried my own matches. And then began the ascent along a broad path, growing ever steeper, past the little idyllic crater lake by Sarasang, where now hotels

and villas are doing all they can to smother the idyll. Indeed, it is the curse that rests upon all our time's nature-worship everywhere in the "civilized" world. Let a lovely and untouched spot be discovered, a patch of out-of-the-way sand and lyme-grass where the oyster-catchers cry, a bit of heath with ling and peat-bog, a woodland lake where the beeches and a sailing buzzard are reflected, and the press becomes eloquent in its astonishment, its annoyance at this waste of a bit of nature which surely belongs to all its readers; next week mass excursions thither are organized, next month the first tents are up, and next year come summer villas and bungalows; and so it is that nature has acquired the tired, careworn expression which contact with many people gives her; she has lost the dew and the bloom from her wings — just like the young woman who has become "sexually emancipated."

We did not stop by the half-smothered idyll, the old Javanese and I, but mounted slowly through the great forests on Lawu's flank with their many-coloured verges and by noon reached the pass at Chemara Sewu — the thousand casuarina trees, it means — six thousand feet up. Now it is naked and bare, but for the traveller on foot in the mountains the pass is the beckoning goal; it is almost

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like reaching home, for now the way lies downhill, and the country, the new country, the country beyond the mountains, stretches smiling and inviting before one's feet.

The old Javanese and I ate under one of the few surviving casuarina trees. He sat, as was becoming, on his hunkers some paces away from "the great lord" and modestly turned his back while he deftly and prettily ate his rice from the plantain leaf with his fingers. He looked disapprovingly at a young Javanese man who also had made a halt at the Warong in the pass and now came up and spoke to me. He was a young man of the clerk class, as anyone could see at once from his white coat with fountain pen and Eversharp in the breast pocket. For the rest he was wearing a cheap tropical helmet on top of his neat "Solo" head-dress, a sarong and bare feet. He looked gaunt and tired.

"*Tabé, Tuan, djangan ambil mara,*"¹ he said. "Is it your lordship's purpose to walk down to Tawang Manggu?"

I looked at him with some surprise, since a Javanese of his class seldom uninvited addresses a European; but I nodded and inquired if he was going

¹ "Greeting, Lord, be not angry," the regular form of address from a Javanese to a European.

the same way and suggested that, if so, we should travel in company, which evidently pleased him.

"Where do you come from?" I asked.

"From Surabaya, Tuan."

"Then how do you come to be up here on Lawu?"

"I have come on foot, Tuan."

"From Surabaya?"

It was more than a hundred and twenty miles through the hottest part of Java. I looked at him.

"But why have you come on foot?" It costs, in fact, very little for a native to travel by train or motor-bus in Java.

"No money," he said laconically.

"And what were you doing in Surabaya?"

"Looking for work," and he added with a bitter smile: "but of course there was none to be had; it's the crisis." The word "crisis" has been naturalized in many languages these last years.

"And what are you going to do now?"

"I'm going home to my mother, who has a little house down here in Tawang Manggu. I've not been home for eight years."

"And where have you been all that time?"

"In Sumatra, clerk on a tobacco plantation at Deli; but it's shut down now and we've all been discharged like so many thousands of others."

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The difference between a Javanese and a Danish unemployed clerk is, among other things, that the former's daily food can be had for about a penny, and, mind you, practically the same food he eats when he has plenty of money. A roof over his head and the necessary clothing are almost as cheap, especially of late years, thanks to Japanese imports. Cold, of course, does not exist on the equator.

Relief of the unemployed is thus unnecessary, since the Javanese village has shown itself capable of absorbing the innumerable unemployed from the closed plantations and factories.

I gave him a packet of Kedú cigarettes, twenty for five cents. His face shone.

“Look at that kampong, Tuan,” he said, as we passed a large village of probably five or six hundred inhabitants with well-to-do houses and gardens. “If we went in there and took all the ready money there is in all the houses and on all the people, I would bet it wouldn't amount to one *ringgit*” (less than a dollar).

When he saw that I doubted, he said: “Yes, Tuan, you don't believe me, but how should the Javanese on the land get money? We have no fixed wage, and no one will buy our labour or what we produce.”

“But you can eat your own rice and corn and

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ketella and fruit. You do not suffer hunger and cold as the poor do in my country. You build your own houses, make your own tools, cultivate your own fields and gardens, and your women can still weave and dye."

"That may be, Tuan, but we are very poor, and we have to work hard. It is easy for the Tuan to talk who is rich and has many servants and cars, and no *susah*." ¹ And he looked at my shoes — they were Lotus golf shoes, not very cheap — and at my photographic apparatus, which, alas, was also an expensive-looking article.

The old Javanese coolie, who only imperfectly understood Malayan, looked disapprovingly at this representative of the younger generation, who perhaps knew a lot about many things, but anyhow were "*kurang ajar*," persons of no manners, since they talked in this way to a *Tuan besaar*.

"Yes," said I, "but now listen to what I have to say. I am not rich — in a way, not as rich as a Javanese who has a house and a bit of *sawah*. I earn a lot of money, several thousand gulden every month, it is true, but what becomes of it? The Government takes nearly a third in taxes, so that you may have schools and hospitals and railways and

¹ Worries.

police." He opened his eyes at this. "To the Chinese who owns my house I have to pay four hundred gulden, and to my servants two hundred and fifty gulden every month. And for everything I buy, my food and my clothes, I have to pay three or four times too dearly, because everyone supposes I am rich. I have to keep two expensive cars because I should be no use without them. I have to work far harder than any of you Javanese; I have to jump to it every time the telephone rings and drive out almost every night when you are asleep. Believe me, my friend, I have just as much *susah* as a whole kampong put together."

"And would the Tuan change with a poor man like me? "

"No one wants to change with any other when it comes to the point. A man is what he is and cannot think of himself as anyone else. But I often long for the simple life which you lead, without servants — or shall we say with one servant — and without cars or telephones; and perhaps I will end my days in a Javanese kampong."

He looked searchingly at me, but my face was grave, and it evidently gave him something to think about.

When we parted at Tawang Manggu, where my

car was waiting, I thanked him for his company and gave him a gulden. He stared at it, and his face lighted up a little.

“*Trima kassih banjak, Tuan, selamat djalan.*”

“*Slamat tinggal*” — and I drove off.

He and his mother could if they chose live for two or three weeks on that gulden; none the less it is quite certain that it was spent the same night, perhaps lost at play, perhaps spent on a little feast with some friends. With the Javanese, economy takes note only of the actual thing; he does not understand the fictive concept “money,” and in any event the concept “saving” goes against all his instincts. *Tout comme chez nous*; with us the word “save” has almost passed out of the language. For the last three or four years I have sought it in vain in the Danish press; it scarcely exists except in compounds such as savings-banks, savings-box, with whose meaning the younger generation are probably very slightly acquainted. To save is non-social; a saver is a suspect and carefully watched individual. Quite amusing that we thus, by having almost completed the circle, should be approximating to the Javanese, who economically has stood still for a thousand years.

I spent that night in a little hotel close by Tawang Manggu and next morning drove slowly

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down to the lowlands by scores of serpentine bends, down to the fertile tobacco and sugar fields of the sultanate. I stopped an hour or two to take farewell of the Siva temples at Prembanan, and saw Mid-Java's own great volcanoes take firm shape and as it were strike root after they had long been floating far off in the shimmering sunlit air.

I spent a night in Jokya, the city of the Sultan, of tobacco, and of sugar. Here the technique of modern Europe meets the ancient Javanese civilization. Shining motor-cars drive past the plate-glass windows of shops in the principal street, from the Grand Hotel to the Post Office, into which at will one can go and telephone by wireless to Denmark. Flying machines circle above the three-foot wall of the Kraton.¹ In this Kraton lives the Sultan of Jokyakarta, a realm as large as Fünen, but with a million and a half of inhabitants. Mangku Buwono is his title; it signifies: "he who carries the world upon his lap." His neighbour prince who rules over Surakarta is called Paku Buwono: "the nail of the world," "he who holds the universe together." Alas, it is only the titles of these princes that have preserved their greatness. What with internal strife and wars with the Dutch, their lands have steadily diminished at

¹ *Kraton*. princely dwelling.

much the same rate as the Danish monarchy, so that they now play much the same role in the Dutch colonial realm as Denmark in the world community of free nations. Their power is nominal, but within the walls of the Kraton the Sultan still holds unrestricted sway over his household. In this complex of villages and palaces, of farms and great towers and barracks, a labyrinth of alleys and walls and gateways, all is still mediæval. Here dwell His Highness's wives and concubines and children, and members innumerable of his family, his royal household and his ministers, his bodyguard, which is partly composed of women, and his dancing girls, his play-actors, and his domestics and whole villages of his craftsmen. His household living within the walls of the Kraton amounts to upwards of fifteen thousand people.

I was walking, towards nine o'clock in the evening, down Tugu, the principal street, on my way to the club, when a young Javanese woman came cycling slowly after me along the edge of the pavement. On reaching my side she stopped, jumped off her bicycle, and said with the utmost composure in excellent Dutch:

"Dag, mijnheer, gaat U mee naar huis?" ¹

¹ "Good evening, mijnheer, are you coming home with me?"

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It was a new and hitherto unknown phenomenon, and it gave me a considerable shock. In the big towns in Java, as in all big towns, there are plenty of that sort of woman, but one saw at the first glance that she just was not of "that sort."

I looked at her. She was young, two or three and twenty at most, obviously of the Priaji¹ class, and with a refined face. She met my glance without embarrassment, but also without impudence, and thrust her left hand lightly under my arm while she led the bicycle with the right.

"Only come with me, mijnheer. It is not very far, and it is clean and cool at my house."

And the strange thing was that, despite her unmistakable demeanour, she made a clean and cool impression. As we went on I involuntarily drew as far away from the street lamps as possible, though this seemed a matter of indifference to her. Down in one of the old lanes behind the Kraton she had a room in a wooden house with an atap roof. It was as clean as a new pin; handsome plaited mats on the cement floor and clean white sheets on the mattress upon the white *balik-balik*.² Strongly scented melati and champak flowers were strewn with a liberal hand over the sheets, on the

¹ The Javanese nobility.

² Divan of plaited bamboo.

floor, and over the plaited bamboo table. Otherwise the unmistakable Javanese odour prevailed, which is a mixture of citronella, sereh, coconut, and cajuput oils; most Europeans only very slowly learn to relish it, but it is an essential part, a necessary ingredient, in the strong magic of this land.

She put out the glaring electric light and lit a small lamp, established me in the best chair, and then began calmly and as a matter of course to undress.

“Wait a moment with that,” I said, “and let us sit comfortably for a little and chat. What is your name, really?”

“Sarina,” she said, and smiled for the first time. It was obviously not her real name. She sat on her hunkers on the mat at my feet, not like a low-caste babu, but as a younger sister sits at the feet of a regent’s Raden Ayu.¹

“It’s no business of mine, Sarina; I know that; and it’s not from curiosity alone that I ask about it, though I won’t deny that I *am* curious. But it’s because in the course of the years I have had many friends among the Javanese Priajis — and your parents belonged to them — isn’t that so, Sarina?”

¹ Wife of a Javanese of high rank.

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“ They are both dead, mijnheer.”

“ And your father was *Wedono* or else he was in the pawnbroking business. What was he, Sarina? ”

“ *Wedono*, mijnheer,” she answered in a small voice, and then she went on as if, once the ice was broken, she were compelled to speak out:

“ I was studying to become a teacher with the nuns, and my younger brother — there were only we two — had just begun to study medicine in Batavia when I had taken my examination. Then Father and Mother died one after the other, and there was no money. I got an engagement and shared my salary with my brother so that he could go on studying. And then came the crisis, and many schools were closed, and I was the youngest and not yet definitely engaged, so I was discharged, and again we had no money.”

“ And how long have you been earning money in this way, Sarina? ”

“ Nearly two years, mijnheer.”

“ And does your brother in Batavia know where the money comes from? ”

“ If he came to know that, mijnheer, you know very well what he would do to me.”

“ And you yourself, Sarina, do you like your new way of life? ” I asked after a pause, laying my hand on her hair.

She now lost a little of her calmness and self-control.

“For more than a year I tried to get a place as a shop-girl, in offices, as a private governess. We both half starved, my brother and I, when my retiring allowance was all spent, and a Raden Ajeng can’t very well take a job as babu, can she, mijnheer? Do you think I ought to have become a babu, mijnheer?” This last she said with considerable passion.

“We look at many things so differently in my country, Sarina. There it is no disgrace for a young girl of good family to go into service, even if it seldom happens. But do you feel no shame at what you are doing now, Sarina?” And I raised her bowed head a little to look into her eyes. But she threw her head to one side, bowed it right down into her lap and began to sob quietly. This, however, did not last long; she looked up at me, smiled a little through her tears, smoothed her dishevelled hair, and took my handkerchief out of my pocket to dry her eyes.

“No, mijnheer, I feel no shame, only now and then a little disgust and nausea; I have sometimes been sick afterwards. But for the most part I no longer feel anything at all; it all goes on as it were

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outside me, it is as if it is not me at all. When it is over I only want to shake myself, to shake and wash it off me like a duck coming up out of the mud. I don't know if you can understand me, mijnheer."

"Perhaps I understand you all too well, Sarina; but what is going to happen to you, who are so young and too good for this life? You can't possibly keep it hidden from your own class in the long run, and sooner or later your brother will come to know."

"I am from West Java, mijnheer, and know no one here in the sultanates, and I never go with Javanese or Chinese, only with whites and preferably with elderly men. And they are often kind to me, but not always, no, not always, mijnheer. But there are two or three who are good friends and understand me as you do, mijnheer."

A little later I said good-bye to Sarina and reflected on the strange effects of the world crisis; this, after all, showed clearly that it was a *world* crisis. It was the first time I had seen a young woman of the Javanese nobility deliberately following the same way which thousands of her Japanese sisters have followed for the same reasons and which in recent years not a few young Russian

women have trodden. The thorny path of self-sacrifice winds through many lands, and women of many races have followed it.

And although in Japan national custom has accepted this expedient, and a few years in the Yoshiwara does not preclude a subsequent honourable marriage, such a thing will certainly be unthinkable in Java, and there can scarcely be any doubt as to Sarina's ultimate fate.

Next morning I drove out along the old Sultan's Road towards Boro-Budur. For many of the Europeans in Mid-Java this old Hindu building is a favourite resort; in these days of cars one can drive there in a few hours from almost any town in Java, eat *rijsttafel* at the little hotel, dutifully climb up on to a few temple terraces, cast a listless glance at one or two of the many hundred reliefs—or avoid them and go away again. Romantic couples go there on wedding trips, preferably at full moon, and waste a part of the evening on the upper terraces. Tourists come in droves from the big steamers and look with angry disappointment at the celebrated monument; they have as a rule expected something “with all the colours of the Orient,” in the taste of the big “Vats” in Bangkok with their tinsel and coloured glass.

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To me it has for years meant a great deal. It is in fact not only in a purely geographical sense the central point of Java; one may perhaps rightly say that this place is the heart of the old Java; here it has concentrated as in one drop its finest essence. For this reason my last visit to the old stupa meant to me my last tryst with Java, the sentimental farewell to thirty years.

Many years ago, when I was young and was in garrison at Magelang and when Boro-Budur was still a heap of ruins, picturesque piles of stones beneath old trees, before the great restoration was begun, I often rode the eleven miles there on Saturday evenings when the moon was full, and drank a bottle of Rhine wine with the old German Sergeant who was manager of the little Government tavern that then stood beside the ruins.

He was an amusing old man who had won the Iron Cross at Sedan and the Order of Wilhelm in Acheh. He had not seen Germany for thirty-three years and, against the advice of his many friends, went home shortly before the Great War, saw modern Germany, and died of it, as well he might.

The tavern — the rest-house — had four little cabin-like guest-rooms decorated with oleographs of Kaiser Wilhelm I and Bismarck, with stuffed birds and queer corals and shells. But the front

veranda with its low atap roof was roomy and cool, open like a Javanese pendoppo, and the great ruins showed up well from thence in the moonlight between the crowns of the canary trees.

Many a night in my youth — and later — have I spent in this solitary place, and every time I had the inexplicable feeling, which everyone knows from his own experience, of having been there before, long ago. This voice, this situation, this face, it has been known of old, though never in this life has one consciously been in the place, heard the voice, or met the person face to face.

Yes, inexplicable, for when for the first time in my life I drove from Semarang along the old road to the south into Mid-Java and the country of the sultanates, when, between the rivers Progo and Ello, which the road follows for a while after the parting of the waters between north and south is passed, I saw the mountain ridge grow wider and slowly expand into the lovely Kedu and Jokya plain watched over and bounded by its four twin volcanoes, my mind was affected in just the same way as when after many years I returned home to my native place; these were known places; here I was at home. And this feeling has never left me in the twenty-five years I have spent in Java.

Perhaps I have been here before and am recog-

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nized and accepted by the spirits of the region; no miracle could be greater than the thousands that make up our daily life. Nothing is wholly improbable in our improbable existence.

In the course of the years I have spent scores of nights by the old stupa, seen it rearise from the ruins in much of its former splendour, seen the tourist hordes go by, and seen the Javanese people bring their floral offerings, although they have long since forgotten the religion, the strange, profoundly pessimistic view of life, which created this astounding monument. And now came the moment of farewell, the last night in which I should sleep with my ear at Java's heart. I spent the time until sunset at the two lesser temples which so surprisingly have been found to lie in a straight line with Boro-Budur, Chandi Pawon, and Chandi Mendút. One supposes that a sacred way, a *via sacra*, once joined them, and that innumerable cloisters and graves of holy men have bordered it, all now vanished without trace; the volcanic soil and the tropical sun and rain have sedulously obliterated everything except the three temples, which were saved not a moment too soon by pious and enlightened modern archæologists.

Mendút now stands, partly restored and reconstructed, by the side of a large Catholic mission

school and church of an ugliness and vulgarity rare even in the tropics. The ancient temple, about twelve hundred years old, now shows clearly its pure, noble, architectonic lines and its extraordinarily delicate, never overlaid ornament. On either side of the upper stair-landing in front of the entrance to the sanctuary there are panels decorated in relief, to the right the god of riches, Kowera, with jewel-casket and playing children, and to the left his consort, Hariti, goddess of fruitfulness, with a swarm of children on her lap and climbing into trees laden with fruit. It is as though the artist's intention has been to let the faithful cast a last glance at the glories of earthly life before passing into the presence of the Master, of him who taught mankind to despise all this and to desire nothing but annihilation. For within, in the small but lofty room right opposite the entrance, the ten-foot image of Buddha is enthroned, sitting in the attitude which indicates that he is preaching, and from his attributes the learned judge that it represents his celebrated first discourse in the deer forest near Benares. Superhuman sublimity and peace shine through this statue, which is undoubtedly one of the world's finest works of religious art. To left and right, on a slightly smaller scale, sit two of his first disciples, the

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Bodhisattvas, Avalokitesvara on the left and Manjusri on the right of the Master, both extraordinarily beautiful, but with a less transfigured, a more human expression.¹

No one can doubt for a second that he stands before the work of a very great artist, reminiscent in many ways of works from the classical period of Egypt. There is less individualization, but there are majesty, greatness, and tranquillity. These statues were fashioned just at the time when an art period had freed itself from the archaic, had attained complete mastery over its materials, and before any scepticism had initiated the decadence the first trace of which may be seen in the magnificent Siva temples at Prembanan.

In the evening when the moon had risen, I ascended, as is proper, up along the eastern approach to Boro-Budur and sat down on the topmost terrace at the foot of the great crowning dagoba or dome, with the intention of meditating a little over things, or perhaps rather only to prepare my mind for the reception of what the night and the spirits of the place might bring.

After I had found my accustomed place, I saw to my surprise that two people, a Javanese couple,

¹ The erudition is derived from Professor N. J. Krom (*Inleiding tot de Hindoe-Javaansche Kunst*; The Hague, 1920).

were sitting quite close to me, but half-hidden in the shadow of one of the sixteen small domes which cover the upper terraces and behind whose crumbled walls one catches glimpses of a sitting Buddha. They sat quite still and took up astonishingly little of the great temple terrace in the darkness and stillness. The Javanese in general are certainly not big, but still it is incredible how little room they require; it is as though they were too unobtrusive, too humble to claim any considerable share of space for their unimportant persons. The capacity of the common people for sitting close together and as it were becoming quite small and evanescent is one of the most striking features of the innumerable ancient reliefs.

In spite of the confusing moonlight it was easy to see that these two did not belong to the common people. He was wearing the dress which is now obligatory for a Javanese of the upper class and which is an idiotic compromise between two fundamentally different ways of dressing. A European helmet over a Javanese head-cloth, European coat and neck-gear, Javanese sarong, and shoes and stockings. She, thank God, was in purely Javanese costume, with bare head, white, fragrant flowers in her black hair, and glittering diamond ear-rings. I knew them at once even before I heard her voice.

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“Good evening, Doctor, you didn’t expect to meet us here,” she said in pure Dutch, and with laughter in her voice, and went on: “But it occurred to me that you were bound to wish to spend your last night in Mid-Java here, so my husband and I drove up here too. We’re not disturbing your devotions?”

“But, my dear Raden Ayu, it was just you I was unconsciously missing. You better than anyone else can give the old ruin a little of the breath and meaning of life. I confess I would not have cared to meet any of my European friends, not even women friends, here this evening. But you who have both grown up, so to speak, in the shadow of this stupa, you whose forefathers thirty generations back have seen it come into existence and perhaps are pictured on its walls, how should you be a disturbance here? You are at home; I am the stranger.”

“Very prettily put,” she said appreciatively. She belonged to one of Java’s oldest families, and though she never spoke of it herself, she loved to hear that others knew it.

“I have brought a few flowers as an offering to the spirits of my ancestors. If they be still near us, this may well be their natural haunt on a night like this.” She said it half shyly, half defiantly.

"Yes," said her husband, smiling, "but the Javanese who really *believe* in and pray to the spirits of their ancestors only reckon that they stay in the neighbourhood of the family for a hundred years. And what are a hundred years to your family?" Although he himself was of the old nobility he was yet a mere parvenu beside his wife and liked to tease her about her pride of birth.

"I don't believe spirits are bound by time and place; they are at home in universal space and eternity, aren't they, Doctor?" And she demonstratively turned her back on her husband.

"Absolutely, Raden Ayu; if they exist, I should suppose they have unrestricted freedom of movement."

"Of course they exist. But now we won't argue any more. If we keep quite still and do not disturb the night and its mysterious forces, then it will come to pass as the poet ¹ wrote in *Songs of Silence*:

"For they who have held their peace together
As we that night by the singing sea
Through the gate of dreams may meet in silence
Forever after where'er they be.

"And don't you believe it is just as effective to keep silence here in such a place and on such a night as by the seashore in your North?"

¹ A. Roland Holst.

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“ Yes, Raden Ayu, indeed I do, and you are perfectly right. He was the singer of silence and its priest, and tonight you shall be its priestess.”

“ No,” she said, and laughed disdainfully. “ I am no priestess, but tonight I am ‘ the Princess of Java ’ as you once christened me when you had been drinking champagne, do you remember? And now my will is that we all be silent. Let us sit together as old friends in this holy place and follow the moon on her course. See, now she stands right over Merapi’s summit and shines down upon the heart of Java. If now we are still, quite still, perhaps we may be permitted to hear it beating.”

He was a young Javanese doctor who had qualified at the medical school in Batavia before it had yet blossomed out into a full-blown medical faculty, and had afterwards travelled to Holland to complete his training by several years’ residence in Leiden. He was now established as surgeon at the hospital in the same town as I, and despite the difference in our ages we had become good friends. He was a fair specimen of the modern Javanese graduate, not very distinguished perhaps, more a type than a character, and so enthusiastic for the European culture which he had been at such pains to acquire that it had, as it were, drained him, dried up the springs of his own nature. The cost

had been too great. He took a lively interest in politics, was already a member of the Provincial Council, and undoubtedly had a political future. But, for all that, she was the more interesting of the two.

Born in a Kraton in one of the sultanates, closely related to the most Europeanized of the Javanese ruling families, she had had a quite modern education, and the gifted and quick-witted young girl had acquired her knowledge with a veritable frenzy. The history of Europe, languages, both the Latin and the Scandinavian, and the history of literature, she had imbibed with an apparently unlimited power of absorption. There is something pathetic in the incredible appetite with which the younger Javanese generation throws itself into the study of our culture. One cannot help comparing it with the time of the Renaissance, when, too, a new world was opening and noble young women of sixteen corresponded in Latin on abstract subjects with famous men. But besides this the ideas of modern democracy had found a receptive soil in this young princess's mind; its individualism, its notions of freedom and humanity, its social ideals, and in general its propensity for undisciplined and uncontrolled speculation on all things between heaven and earth. Since, in fact, the young women seldom get a chance to see the

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reverse of the medal, but only learn to know our civilization at second hand, they easily become *plus royalistes que le roi*, regard Europe uncritically as the promised land, a paradise on earth, and pass their youth in Rousseauesque dreams. Her generation was more fortunate than that to which her mother had belonged, when the enlightenment of the parents had perhaps permitted the daughters to receive a modern education, but seldom went the length of realizing the consequences this must involve for their daughters when married to men of conservative views among their own people, men who as a rule were quite out of sympathy with notions of liberty, fraternity, and equality and other forms of nebulous idealism. Then it was that the really tragic conflicts arose which sometimes ended in the classic fashion of tragedies.

She had been luckier. The two young idealists found each other when he was studying medicine in Batavia and she attending the high school in the same place, and the affair developed with such inevitability and showed itself possessed of such driving force that both families were carried along by the gale without offering any considerable resistance. They were married as soon as he had passed his examination, and she later went with him to Holland, where she studied the humanities and

moreover acquired the very necessary correctives to her book-learning, so that now at six or seven and twenty she was well equipped to play a part in the young-Javanese political and cultural movement.

Our friendship dated from the birth of her only child, when her husband had called me in because certain complications had appeared which necessitated a major operation. All had gone well, and her gratitude was touching and permanent. It was impossible to her to mention my name or introduce me to anyone without appending as a standing formula: "Dr. W., who saved my life." It could be not a little embarrassing at times.

She was handsome, of the aristocratic Hindu-Javanese type, which is best preserved among the nobility in the ancient sultanates of Mid-Java. A narrow head carried high, with the blue-black, slightly waving hair strained back from a high forehead to a knot at the neck; a straight, very slightly hooked nose, a large but finely formed mouth, and the most remarkable eyes, the eyes of a poetess, a Delphic Sibyl, black as mine-shafts, but luminous with an inward light as from hidden riches in their depths. Her skin colour was the clear mat yellow which in Javanese poetry is always likened to the rind of the langsep fruit. She looked

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at first glance smaller than she was, simply because she was so symmetrically built. The proportions of her body were correct, and consequently her walk and movements were the loveliest and most natural in the world, neither panther-like nor antelope-like nor reminiscent of any other graceful member of the animal kingdom, but just such as a man's heart desires and dreams that a young woman's walk and movement should be. And her bearing always brought back to my memory a verse by a dead Danish poet:

But even when seemed she familiar and near
I still was enraptured no less
To find in her bearing the far-away air
That the queens of the poets possess.

Altogether a not quite ordinary young woman. We sat long silent while the moon mounted and all sound died. We saw how in the moonlight the earth, as it were, smoothed the wrinkles in her ancient face; ravines and valleys lost their depth, the mountains became remote and small as mole-hills, but all near things grew doubly large and strangely vivid, as if now in the night they unveiled for the first time their veritable faces. The moon shadows crept slowly about the mighty stupa's innumerable corners and recesses, played

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along the steep stairways and relief-decorated panels and balustrades. The four hundred and thirty-two Buddhas sat motionless in their niches and dagobas and stared with the far-away smile of perfection out over the ten thousand palm-crests whose leaves gleamed like steel in the cold light. The cicadas were singing as if possessed, as if drunk, but their music is silence itself. Fireflies sought one another gropingly and tardily, and bats carried on their untiring nightly hunt. Every moment one of them sketched his silhouette against the disk of the moon.

The next morning before sunrise the doctor and I met again on the upper terraces. The last fireflies were still dancing while the light mounted in the eastern sky. Under our feet lay the plain of Kedu, the most populous region in Java and one of the most thickly peopled in the world. The whole plain seen from up there is like a roof of palm-crests, so close are the villages to one another. Now before sunrise it was a white sea of mist, filled with an archipelago of green islands from which the lowing of cattle, the bleating of goats, and the crowing of thousands of cocks arose like a morning hymn from a submerged land, a tropical Atlantis. Smoke from innumerable fires rose through the

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mist, and the turtle-doves began their cooing from every one of the invisible houses — Java's all-pervading sound.

We sat long and silent and looked at the astonishing panorama beneath us and all round the horizon. The rounded height of Tidar rose quite near; to the Javanese it is the head of the nail which holds Java in its place in the ocean. Behind us to the south-south-west the horizon is closed just at the right moment by the savage, riven rocks of the Minoreh mountain chain. One of its peaks bears in its contour the profile of Guenadharma, the master builder, according to tradition, of Borobudur. To the north the massif of Ungaran blocks the way to the sea. In the north-west Sumbing raises its perfect cone eleven thousand feet towards the sky; it is Mid-Java's highest peak, the first earthly thing to meet the rays of the rising sun; and in the east stand the two brothers, Merbabu, broad and tranquil and firmly grounded, and by its side Merapi, a little lower, but full of fire and suppressed heat, capable all too often of finding vent in frightful outbursts of wrath. In the saddle between these two the sun comes up, and we saw it begin to glow and blaze. We saw the white sea of mist vanish blushing before the swiftly increasing light. And then the summit of Sumbing

began all at once to be transfigured; it was like a flower that opened as if born that instant of the receding night. And in a moment the world was transformed; the tropic day held sway.

“I suppose it is with you as with me, that every time you come here you have to speculate anew about the strange fate that must have overtaken the people who shaped these monuments. Have you any theory about it? What do the modern Javanese think about the great mystery?”

I was alluding to the known historical fact that all records of the mighty realm of Mataram in which the Hindu culture in Java had flowered so richly from the eighth to the tenth century had suddenly disappeared. From the year 928 all is silent; there is not a vestige, not a dirge in history, not a memory, not a tradition preserved among the people.

He shook his head. “All we know for certain is that the residence and seat of power was transferred to East Java, but that cannot wholly explain why this uncanny silence rests upon an important civilization, a flourishing kingdom that was in the middle of the erection of mighty sanctuaries. Perhaps the gods gave a sign which compelled the people to abandon their old dwellings; perhaps an eruption of Merapi, perhaps a plague that de-

stroyed most of them and drove the rest to flight. Or it may be that everything withered thus suddenly and decisively because the blossoming had been all too copious and luxuriant. And so silence fell upon them for six hundred years."

"Yes, it is certainly long since the Egyptians produced anything original, more than two thousand years, I believe. And how long will it be before the Germanic race has ceased to flower and lies fallow for a thousand years? Phenomena of this kind lend themselves admirably to profound speculations, but one cannot explain them."

"Yet speculations of this kind can be extremely fascinating. But here comes Raden Ayu. It must be in your honour that she appears with the sun." We received her with enthusiasm, partly because it was in itself a lovely sight to see her climb the steep stairway, partly because we saw that she was followed by a servant bearing the coffee which in Java is always served in the morning the moment one comes out of one's bedroom. Was served, I should say, for this custom, which in the good old days was as immutable as the laws of the Medes and Persians, is, alas, observed no longer. It has gone the way of the other fine old custom which prescribed that the first *pait* (gin and bitters) was brought by the boys in the evening on the stroke of

eight, and by this I mean *literally* on the stroke. At eight o'clock a gun (*pukul bum*) was fired to give the time to the ships in the roadstead, and in the last minutes before *pukul bum* one used to see the boys busy with the final preparations for the moment the shot sounded to bring the national drink *at a run*. The man who drank *pait* before *pukul bum* was regarded as a drunkard.

“So now you are going away from us, Doctor, you are forsaking us. You really suppose that you can sever the bonds that bind you to this country. Astonishing people, these Europeans! They come out here young and give the best work and energies of their lives to this country, and then suddenly leave it, apparently with no interest in reaping where they have sown, yes, often without seeing what grows up where they have cleared the jungle.”

“Yes, Raden Ayu, there you are touching on the fundamental problem of all tropical colonization. We are not, and because of the climate never can be, real immigrants; sooner or later we have to return home. Our children cannot grow up and learn to look upon this country as their home; at best as their second home, and that is not quite the same thing. We who have been here for long, who have learned to love the country and its people, we

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have become a kind of double entities, split to the depths of our being, incurable."

"Tell us, Doctor, why really did you come out? What was it that impelled you?"

"That question is one that in the course of the years we have hundreds of times put to ourselves, we who are a part of the surplus of the old Europe, the overflow from her all too full vat. In our youth indeed it was for the most part the adventure, the dangerous life, the dream of gold and honour, the king's daughter and the half of his kingdom. Later, when we supposed ourselves to be wiser, for many of us it was the idea of 'the white man's burden' and all that, which is so much out of favour nowadays but in which, none the less, there is an eternal core of truth. We really at that time believed in the greatness of our civilization even if we interpreted it in many ways. Some brought Christianity, others hygiene, some brought liberalism, others only technical progress. The hygiene and the technical progress you lapped up like sweet milk, the Christianity you let alone, and the liberalism you have used with great ingenuity as a stick to beat your teachers with."

"Perfectly right," said the doctor, "only we have never hit hard enough." And he smiled a little bitterly.

“Gradually as we grew older we became more and more idealistic and at the same time more priggish; the watchword came to be that our task was only to educate you, to mould you in our image, as our Lord did Adam, in order afterwards from our heaven with paternal benevolence to look on at your defence of the civilization we had given you. And there are indeed many of the generation to which you, Raden Ayu, and your husband belong who would be equal to that task.”

“Yes, it was this we dreamed of; that was why we plunged with such enthusiasm into an alien spirit that we became emigrants from our own. Many of us are still believers, but there are a few of us who are beginning to realize that we shall never be in a position to carry on this defence you speak of. It is all on the outside, what we have learned from you. It is not blood of our blood, soul of our soul; how should we be able to defend all this against the jungle, which here is so mighty and spreads at such a tearing speed? The primeval forest will come down from the mountains as irresistibly and as fatefully as Birman Wood to Dunsinane, when the last white man has gone. And in its train malaria and cholera, flood and famine, corruption and indolence and many others of the spectres we all know too well.”

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I looked at her with the greatest astonishment at hearing from her own mouth these words, which I never would myself have uttered in her presence. I had never guessed that she saw so deeply and clearly into the nature of her own people.

“ We have perhaps intelligence enough, and before long we shall have enough people who have mastered the technique, but we lack one quality, the most necessary of all. We lack your frightful energy, the perseverance which not only sets the machine in motion, but keeps the wheels running year after year. History teaches us that this is seldom or never engendered on the equator.”

I glanced at her husband, who sat silent and reserved. I realized that inwardly he nourished the same doubt, but also that he never would admit it.

“ No, my friend,” she went on, “ at one time our people possessed a culture of their own, simple and beautiful, as we can see from its scattered remains. It was stifled by Islam four hundred years ago and now lies buried under all that they superimposed upon our country. Is it anywhere recorded in history that an ancient, ruined culture has blossomed anew? ”

She coloured, partly from eagerness and interest, partly in embarrassment that she was doing so much of the talking.

“I don’t know whether it is recorded, Raden Ayu, but it is scarcely conceivable in the mechanical age. The problem must be to graft the new on to the old stem; it will take many generations, and none can form a guess of the result, although you and your husband walk the earth as living witnesses to its possibility. But let us not discuss the future; let us talk about ourselves in this last hour.

“Perhaps you can hardly understand how anyone of his free will can return home to that old Europe that is stumbling blindly forward upon unknown ways, bowed to the ground under its self-imposed burdens. And the temptation is great to stay here where life in spite of everything is easier, the friction less. But home one must go, home to the sources of one’s own culture, which certainly now seems to be devouring its own dogmas as the revolutions devour their children. Home so as to be able to sift and choose the ballast which is to make safe the navigation of the sea of old age. Much must be thrown overboard. Life has become too involved, the machine we have created too complex. I can imagine myself ending my days in a little house on a high tableland not far from here, a place you know just as well as I. Living Javanese-fashion, but, mark you, surrounded by some few of the products of technical progress. The simple life,

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yes, but with good light, with pure running water through the house, books, a good phonograph, a few works of art, a horse, and one or two good friends of both sexes not too far away — and my list of requirements is for the moment exhausted.”

They both roared with laughter, thinking of the somewhat more complicated establishment I had kept up for many years, which they knew so well.

“ So much for the material ballast; what about the spiritual, Doctor? ”

“ A bit difficult to produce to order, like rabbits out of a hat. What has filled my life is — wonder. I have never got over my astonishment at this world.”

“ I have heard of this before, your dream of the simple life in Java’s mountains, but I *know* you will never come back to Java and your friends here, and you surely feel that you have real friends in our country. Let us talk about ourselves, you say; well, you who have lived so long among us still do not perhaps quite know how we think, we Javanese Priajis of the old families. I am going to disclose it to you even if you should want to laugh at me afterwards, for it is a bit comical. We think *few-dally*, yes, in spite of our hyper-modern education and in spite of the fact that it is generations since we ruled over the earth otherwise than as officials

of an alien government. Our ideals are those of the age of chivalry, or rather of minstrels and crusaders, in any event not those of the samurai; there is no hardness in us, no love of fighting, and, alas, perhaps not much vigour. We are easy to break, but not to bend, and we are very loyal, my friend."

She was not looking at me, but at the summit of Sumbing, which stood out clear and far against the morning sky, while the light spread down along the mountain's side. She avoided looking at me, and I knew that it was because there were tears in her eyes.

"You know our people believe in something we call *guna-guna*, the 'quiet power.' When once you have settled down among family and friends in your own country, when you have forgotten the heat and the mosquitoes, the dirt and the poverty, all the gilded wretchedness here, when you have forgotten so much that you, as your Kierkegaard says, can begin to remember, then will come the longing which like a firm and irresistible hand will seize your heart. On many a sleepless night you will see in the darkness these mountain peaks floating sunlit above the sea of cloud like a glorified vision, like the islands of the blest. You are bewitched; you are in the magic mountain, and never will you feel quite content. It will be the quiet

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power working. You carry away for good a little of our soul-stuff, and it will mark you to your last day."

It was becoming too hot up there, and besides there was nothing more to say; she was right. I happened to look at her hand, saw how slender it was with those long, thin fingers that can be bent so far backward as almost to touch the wrist, a hand so aristocratic that it approaches that of the gibbon. So distinct from every nordic woman's hand that the impassable barrier in race, in blood, all at once became evident as never before, though I had seen it scores of times; became an all-compelling fact that exacted silence and submission.

We went down, left the upper terraces, those bare, pure levels where only the Dhyani Buddhas sit almost invisible in their broken-down domes, and all decoration, everything ornamental, is omitted. In accordance with the symbolism of the whole building one is here in the sphere of the higher wisdom, superior to the earthbound world of phenomena. We descended the steep stairway, went through the galleries swarming with reliefs with their luxuriant ornament, and all at once it struck me that here beside me in the flesh was the model that the great artists had used for their queens and goddesses twelve hundred years before.

Yes, her forefathers might have lived at King Sailendra's court, and marvellously she had preserved the purity of type, brought it down unblemished through the centuries. She might have been Maya, the mother of the Perfect One, as she is seen in the relief, straight and slender, in the grove at Lumbini, where she supports herself with her right hand on a branch of the satin tree while the new-born Buddha issues from her right side in full possession of memory and knowledge.

Or Gopa, Prince Siddharta's bride, she who is described so vividly, so convincingly in the *Lalitavistara*, the ancient narrative of the Master's life which is used and faithfully followed in one of the many series of reliefs.

After King Suddhodana had exhorted the Prince to marry, the future Buddha pondered for seven days and nights what demands he must place upon his future wife. It came to be a long list, and one cannot but sympathize with the worries of the King and his counsellors. Meanwhile the King caused all the five hundred young women of rank in Kapilavastu to pass before the Prince, who gave to each of them a valuable jewel; but not one of them ventured to approach him or to lift her eyes to the majesty and divine radiance that emanated from his person. Last came Gopa fol-

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lowed by her slave girls, but by then the Prince had no more gifts left. She went fearlessly up to him, looked him in the eyes, and said: "Prince, what wrong have I done that you condemn me?" Then Prince Siddharta took from his own finger a costly ring, which he gave her while she knelt down before his feet and made *sembah*.

This scene is depicted on the forty-second relief, and the same meek and yet distinguished, at once proud and yielding, rhythm was unmistakable in the Raden Ayu's bearing and walk. Not less would she have been a worthy model for the theme rendered in the fiftieth relief. The Brahmans are upbraiding Gopa that she, who is now Prince Siddharta's wife, shows herself at court with unveiled face. Then she stood up before them all and said: "They whose soul possesses not shame nor bashfulness, they who know not virtue and speak not truth, let them cover themselves with a thousand articles of apparel, and they yet go more naked than nakedness itself. But why should she cover her face whose soul is veiled, whose senses are under the dominion of the will?"

My two friends wished to visit a colony for lepers which her family had established in that district, and since I was going the same way we went

so far together. There I saw at the gate of the village a new and living relief worthy of a place among the loveliest at Boro-Budur. It was like a scene from the Old Testament or from the *Lalita-vistara* to see the Wedono's wife who managed the colony sink down in the dust before the Raden Ayu, whom she had not seen since childhood; but the gesture with which the young Javanese woman bent down and raised her up in her arms was unforgettable, veritably queenly. One single gesture, and one realized that a long life's faithful service was royally rewarded.

We parted on the road in sun and dust in front of the home of these poor unfortunates, and there was one thing I envied them all.

I drove on along the long, winding road over Mageláng and Párakan and Wonosóbo with the eternal roar of mountain becks, over Banyarnegára and down through the Serayu valley, through scores of little villages with the most melodious names. Often along small rivers which the road always tries to follow and crosses innumerable times. The water finds for itself the lowest way across the mountains, but the road must wind, must climb up to their shoulders in endless curves. The river only wants to get home to the sea, but the road wants to go to the towns, those queer

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communities where we think to escape the loneliness we fear, but often only find a loneliness of another kind, more deadly than Robinson Crusoe's upon his island.

Sukabumi and Sindanglaya came and went like variations on the same theme; and then at last I was running down from the Punchak pass towards the plain of Batavia and saw Java at my feet in sun and shower, greener than any other land and still full of peace and dreams.

Batavia, on the contrary, is full of new big buildings, monuments to the vigour and energy with which this land is governed — but irrelevant, without inward relation to the spirit and nature of the country.

At Tanjong Priok I went aboard the *Christiaan Huygens*, which, though not one of the very largest, is a good example of those modern machines which have yet preserved the old and honourable name of ship. There were a thousand passengers on board and two thousand friends and relations went ashore when the bell sounded to announce our departure. There were a few red eyes; here and there a solitary tear was shed — but the orchestra struck up its jazz, and so we went off in holiday mood, without the sense of the tragical which in former times dominated these partings for the

long journey. Flattened out — like almost everything in the modern world — “matter-of-fact” — a trip to Holland, and on board the dance goes on — the bridge parties continue. Only the sea is the same as when a thousand years ago the Malays crossed it in their sampans and praos and colonized Madagascar.

On the morning of the second day I stood on the deck at daybreak and again saw Singapore Roads lying in the mother-of-pearl union of sea and sky which is one of nature's finest but most evanescent effects. The ships at anchor became as airy and floated as lightly in the strange substance as if at any moment they might set their course upward towards the last paling stars.

When one comes from the Dutch to the English colonies it is natural to make comparisons, and it is almost impossible to refrain from the most sweeping generalizations.

There is no humbug about the Dutchman, nothing you need fear looking closely into. He is capable, persevering, a brilliant organizer, often a pioneer in technical matters. His aviation is the best in the world, daring and yet safe; and one could telephone by wireless from Java to Holland long before New York could thus converse with London. He is so sober and staid, is so afraid of

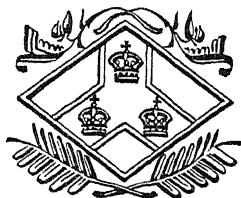
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attitudinizing, that he scorns it even when it is natural and in dealing with Oriental people useful, even necessary. His sense of reality is too great in proportion to his imagination. With the German it is just the other way about. For this reason they both often lack the true equilibrium; they cannot always find the right proportions. The Dutchman's house is so deeply founded that it does not always get finished; it tends to be like the Victory Column on Waterlooplein in Batavia. The column is massive, capable of carrying elephants; the lion it does carry is like a mouse.

With the Englishman at his best the foundation is not less solid than the Dutchman's, the superstructure not less grandiose than the German's. He possesses something rare which is inborn in him and gives confidence and equilibrium, the capacity to be himself, unaffected and unawed; apparently modesty itself, but in reality possessed of the greatest asset in the world, self-confidence — confidence, be it said, not in his intelligence, but in his instinct.

PART IV

PENANG AND TONGKAH
A FEW REMARKS ABOUT MORS



XIV. *Penang and Tongkah*

PULO PENANG is about as large as Mors, and if one happens to have been born on Mors, it is disconcerting to reflect that far more of the inhabitants of the world connect a conception with the word Penang than with the name of the fertile and well-organized island of Mors, which has faithfully voted Left in Danish politics since the days of Christen Berg.

One may come to Penang from the north, south, and west by ship and from the east by train. I have arrived there in the course of the years by all four ways; so next time I intend, like Cyrano, to choose a fifth. Last time I came from Java for a wedding because I was interested in the bride, who, like so many other girls from the North, had fol-

lowed the voice of her heart and the call of the man and had been drawn from the woods and fields of Thule to the tropical jungle which is peculiarly insidious and poisonous to the blond type that has grown up near the shores of the North Sea. Yes, how many of those young Danish women have shared the fate of Olivia Marianne and now rest, like Sir Stamford's young wife, in one of those miserable little European churchyards which in the tropics make so pathetic an impression, so hopelessly forgotten and forlorn, so utterly homeless in that overwhelming, brutal greenness.

Penang is about of a size with Mors, but differs from the island with the gloomy name in consisting of mountains covered with primeval forests, with small inhabited patches along the coast.

The strait which divides it from Asia is quite narrow in the middle where the town of Georgetown lies, because at that point the island and Asia put out their tongues at each other, a petrified geographical grimace — seen from up at the Crag Hotel. There I have sat many a morning before sunrise, before the last stars were put out and while the thousands of lights of the town and the ships glittered two thousand four hundred feet below me. At the turn of the seasons there is a drift of scraps of fog and cloud across the strait and on

over the tree-tops of the jungle, and the sky is full to bursting-point of stored-up rain, dark brown and with the threatening stillness of a peat-bog. Only the narrowest strip shines timorous and grey in the east over the mountain crests on the mainland. The strait is grey and dead as the tin of which the soil here is full, and the clouds trundling slowly off over its surface are massive as rollers — from want of light. One hears never a bird, only all the time the thunder in the distance, and the jungle lies dead still; one cannot yet make out the individual trees.

Without your clearly perceiving it, it grows lighter. It is like one apparently dead coming to life and having begun to breathe before you know it.

The strait is still grey, but steel-grey, and soon it gleams translucently like ice. The little streak above the mountain crests takes courage, it widens, grows in brightness from minute to minute; now it is no longer grey, it begins to gleam and glow, yellow, orange, nay, purple, and at a single point it blazes up and flames. There is no doubt, a fire has been lighted in the sky behind the veil of cloud, and through rifts and holes it is sending flickers of light of all the colours of heaven down over the sea and the mountain-sides.

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The birds are awakened by the light and unfold themselves like the rain tree's leaves when it falls on them.

The dawn wind moves cool and insistent out over the tree-tops of the jungle.

The miracle has happened, the oldest and the greatest — "There was light." How fortunate if now one could kneel and from a full and candid heart thank the God of light for the new-born day.

But there are times when one more profoundly understands Michelangelo's *Aurora* and the pain, yes, the loathing in her face, and when one longs more for the night and oblivion.

Later in the morning the wind dies down, and the fog lays itself soft and warm as a bed of down over the forest. It is like a gentle October mist at home, not inimical or dangerous; rather melancholy and quite untropically charged with emotion; now and then it thickens into a soft, warm rain, and at times it lifts one of its thousand hatches for a moment's view over the plain down there and the sea. Within the jungle no other sound is heard but the drip from the branches and one's own steps in the wet withered leaves that lie so thick and soft upon the narrow path.

After a sharp turn in the path there comes a sound like the lowing of a melancholy cow in the

distance, only on a slightly higher register and more doleful. But cows do not graze in the jungle.

It is a monkey, the old male's warning cry, and it is quite close. I peer into the dense mass of leaves, but all is quiet, till suddenly the whole forest becomes alive; there is a rustling, a roaring, a swaying in the tree-tops; one sees the boughs bend and fly back when the big monkeys spring, but of the beasts themselves one gets only a fleeting glimpse, so well do they understand how to conceal themselves on this breakneck flight through the tree-tops.

And as soon as they feel themselves in safety, an astonishing racket begins, a racket which a modern human being coming straight from a capital city and having never been near the tropical jungle would instantly recognize.

It is, in fact, the jazz orchestra itself, complete with all its instruments. There are files and saws and rasps to which the males in their inordinate rage at the propinquity of human beings supply the originals with easy naturalness. There is the whimpering and feeble piping and wailing of the young which we have so many times heard imitated on wood-wind and flower-pots, often by ape-like virtuosi who in the most natural manner in the world use all four hands; and there are the saxo-

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phones of the females, the mothers and grandmothers, piercing, laughably lugubrious.

One has but to have heard this orchestra once to be for ever convinced that we have done the Negroes wrong in ascribing to them the honour of the discovery of this music. At most they form an intermediate link. It is older; we must go much further back. It is really primitive; it derives from their collaterals who stayed in the forests and retained their instincts.

I wonder if the time will not soon come when some German investigator will discover the Bandar people's sculpture, and we will all kneel and bang our foreheads on the ground (a hollow sound in most cases) before the pegs to which they have given "significant form" and with a large and generous gesture have left behind them in the forest.

But the orchestra plays only for a few minutes, and before you have got over your bewilderment over so much indignation, your shame at having set such violent passions in motion, all is quiet in the mist and the jungle, and the Bandar people are occupied in scratching and delousing themselves, and also in that pastime which is the only one which jazz expresses to perfection.

PENANG AND TONGKAH

Here and there I came upon great migrations of the ant people, mostly of a small but thickset blackish red kind.

A tribe on this kind of march is quite military in its disposition. A numerous advance guard who reconnoitre and find the way, and at a short interval the main force in column of march, four ants abreast on the average, as close on each other's heels as the line of automobiles on Fifth Avenue. A living ribbon a good inch wide, each ant in its leader's footprints, moves like an endless snake through the jungle. And it is not clear to the observer what principle governs the advance guard's choice of the way they follow; only that so far as possible it is a straight line, which, however, is not in the jungle the shortest. They go over great rocks and fallen tree-trunks, often up stumps a yard or two in height and down again, where a turning movement would seem to be nearer and more advantageous. But ants are geometricians and doctrinaires. An ant has learned once for all that the straight line is the shortest way between two points, and so — *fiat justitia, pereat mundus*.

The column has its progeny with it; about every other ant carries an egg or a pupa in its mandibles. Out at the sides of the column go scouts to observe

and give warning of enemies, which, however, I never saw them do; it may be that their task is rather to keep the column together.

For three days and nights I observed such a tribe on the march. A rough calculation gave about a hundred ants passing in a minute, six thousand in an hour, a hundred and fifty thousand in the twenty-four; that is to say about half a million in three days and nights, and the procession had not yet grown thinner. On both sides of the column at a distance of a pace or two a number of single ants of another kind were moving, somewhat larger, black, long, and swift as lightning. These were brigands that swarmed about the host like the Cossacks on the fringes of the Grande Armée. Every moment one of them darted in with a movement like that of a hawk and snapped an ant out of the ranks. There was a second's upset and confusion, but the column closed up immediately and the march went on.

What a life, what savagery and what adventures — and what inconceivable prodigality of nature!

Is our life less prodigal, less dangerous? How many of us think of the perils that lie in wait for us at every corner, how many of us perceive the adventure through whose gateways we pass as under the rainbow? We, too, go our blind way through

the fog in life's jungle; we carry each his little burden towards the same invisible goal, one his cross, the other his gold, and we endure life because we possess the happy faculty of pushing the thought of the night into the background of the soul. In common with all living things we possess the faculty of forgetting.

In many places in the jungle grows the strange pitcher-plant, which reminds one a little of a greatly enlarged mistletoe. It has long, lanceolate leaves which continue in a thick stalk, and this again carries a large, beautifully shaped pitcher with the most elegant close-shutting lid, which stands coquettishly ajar when the flower is mature. The big pitcher is then half full of a liquid, a drink of oblivion — “a kind *Nepenthe*” — for all small overbold flies who, intoxicated with the sun and the air, venture down into the flower's depths, the *Venusberg* from which none returns.

Between the archipelago's thousands of islands and up along the coast of Malacca ply many small white steamers — nowadays for the most part quite modern, completely “businesslike” and “matter-of-fact”; not in the least more romantic than those which run between the Danish islands and up along our narrow fjords. But only a generation ago it was a fleet of a quite special kind,

these small white coasters from the Clyde or the Tyne, which nosed round the distant archipelagos, beat their way for hundreds of miles up tropical rivers where crocodiles sunned themselves, and brought young men out to the loneliness and the adventures which they only understood long afterwards. Many yarns were spun, and there was high play and hard drinking in their little saloons where the hanging lamps swung and lighted dimly the fixed tables with their evergreen table-cloths, the revolving chairs, and the little sofas with their invariable green plush. Their time is over now, when the world closes its watertight bulkheads everywhere and every country intends to have enough on its own bill of fare. Let us hope that it only is a way of making the world new again for the next generation. One result of it now is that their crews and passengers are of a more mixed description and their cargo of a spicier smell, indeed, so spicy that at the first encounter one is a little in doubt whether it really can be called a "smell," and after an hour's time has decided that it is just on the hair-fine line which separates smell from stink. But in the evening when the wind has dropped and the hot darkness wraps itself like a fur cape about the ship, then the between-decks aroma confidently and firmly takes charge; pene-

trating, invisible and impalpable, but in the highest degree real, in every quarter of the ship, and one is in doubt no longer.

We were running once at dawn into Tongkah Roads through the narrow straits between jungle-clad islands where the monkeys sit, early risen, in the trees and make faces at us and at one another and at the world at large. In Tongkah Roads we waited that Sunday morning six hours for the Siamese gentlemen who were concerned with passports and customs. Since I had nothing else to do I amused myself with looking at the officials from this last independent country of tropical Asia. Here it is indeed the "coloured people" who have the dominion and power, and they let one know it. They are polite enough, cool, tremendously businesslike. But they see nothing against letting a shipload of whites wait several hours. Why not? Our hurry strikes them as ridiculous and undignified. For them, in fact, time is seldom money. And tropical races have nothing against money in itself, but they have a natural aversion from working for it. And when all is said, they are perfectly right. Money does not particularly impress them, but even the humblest Javanese coolie has a keen eye for the white Tuan's character. He sees lightning-swift whether it is a "*Tuan alus*" or a

“*Tuan kasar*,” whether it is a gentleman he has before him or a nobody. And this can sometimes be difficult enough for us white tropical folk here, where all whites are “lords” and have acquired a certain cut.

But I escaped ashore at last in western Siam, and there stood the bride in whom I had a certain interest, and smiled sweetly and amiably at me. We drove for many hours through jungle and rubber forest, were ferried across wide estuaries, passed old and new tin mines, and at last sat on our trunks on a tip-cart and so came to Pangnga, an idyllic, wooded river valley between forest-covered hills. But alas! the jungle hereabouts is sadly cut up and the valley is full of “sound and fury.”

An enormous dredging machine inclosed in a corrugated iron house floating in its own bilge-water sits like a gigantic cup of venom in the centre of the valley and eats its way slowly through the soil. It digests the tin; in any event it retains it within itself, but spews the dead earth which has been through the machine out through long, projecting gutters. Yes, the earth is dead, as we knew it from pictures of Flanders and Picardy; it looks as though it had been blown up by mines, bombarded by heavy artillery. In the midst of the bril-

liant blue and green the soil lies in dirty yellow heaps and ridges; here and there lie withered, charred trees and bushes; it is civilization's entry into the jungle, and it is a little hard on Mother Earth and the green landscape.

In the woods on the heights on both sides of the valley all is still wild, and buck and pig and panther scent the machinery and listen to the dredger's song. Now and then three or four elephants come dragging past the machine, which is of the most modern type, electrical throughout. Soon of these wild dwellers in the country only those will be left which we preserve as a sop to our conscience.

Tin and rubber are indispensable to what we call "civilization," but civilization hates and persecutes all that is wild and quiet.

I often went in the mornings up along the river, through open low wood with small lawns strewn about, a good deal reminiscent of Ermelunden. Thousands of birds' voices filled the air; waders of unknown species ran about the sandbanks and raised their saw-like cry. Woodpeckers hammered and doves cooed; many song-birds bore loud witness against Poul Møller's words about "Gay-plumaged birds, but no song," just as innumerable strongly fragrant flowers contradicted his "great gaudy flowers without scent."

As to the "heartless maids with golden clasps," it is and always will be a precarious thing to try to determine the specific gravity of hearts. But I think I have known hearts that beat beneath a langsep-coloured skin, not less pure, proud, and honest than any nordic woman's. "Not to be bought with promise of gold and silver."

There is a thrush here that sings more beautifully and with a more virile ring than any Danish song-thrush. The Danish bird-song, and come to that the Danish voice, has always something flimsy about it, a tone as of wood, of willow pipes; but this thrush sings like an Italian singer — with a voice of steel and silver.

The air trembles with heat and song; there is no human dwelling in sight; buffaloes lie here and there in the water with only their nostrils and their foreheads with the great horns visible. Four elephants in a row pass slowly along the other bank of the river, each with two men upon its back. Seen from a distance, they move with a strange lightness. Their astonishing contours accord so perfectly with the landscape and the atmosphere here that you involuntarily nod your head and admit that the Creator is right. They walk as if they had eternity before them, without goal and without purpose, only following every fleeting suggestion

that passes through their brains. Therefore every one of their movements is as casual and yet as inevitable, every flexion of their trunks as graceful as the curves of a cat's tail, every flap of the heavy ears, which with a hundred pounds' weight flick away the flies, like a tacking sail, like the leaves of the teak tree when the monsoon shakes them. Those legs that are like columns are lifted, bent, and put down with a panther-like ease and grace. When an elephant stops and tears a branch from a tree with its trunk it is with a gentleness of movement as when a young girl plucks a flower.

Yes, here time yet stands still, here all is as it was a thousand years ago ; here still sounds an echo of the song of the bird of eternity.

But soon the digging-machine will dig its way along this river valley, and the new gods will conquer as always. The tin god and the rubber god are of a tougher fibre than the spirits that watch over the virgin jungle.

And so good-bye to all this ; good-bye to Siam and Malacca and to the jungle which is being eaten up by the machine as by a cancer. Good-bye, thrushes and elephants, sleepy river, with buffaloes and iguanas in your shady depths, and wild limestone rocks with your caves and tunnels.

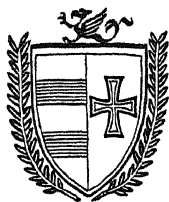
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Hardly shall I see it again, for time is going on, and the shadows are falling; and soon it will be for ever too late. Good-bye, bride of yesterday, mother tomorrow, and good luck to you; you may thank your stars that you do not know you have already lived your best moments.

Now it is time to turn homeward if one still can find the way, "the little path to your native land," which has become badly overgrown with the years. I saw the Crag darken as we stood out of the strait heading north-west, darken from green to blue and, in the end, night-black against the sunset's last dim gold. That, too, vanished, and the darkest night descended over Acheh, where my youth won and lost its first throw.

Youth — yes, where is it? Can it have vanished, come to nothing? Inconceivable, when one has always been ready with a text about the miracle of life, its inexhaustible wonder. Ah well, this too is a part of the wonder.

But round the next corner, behind the next headland, lies the island of adventure where all of vanished youth dreams and waits.



XV. *A Few Remarks about Mors*

WITH Mors it is otherwise.

Only a few people know that Mors fills up the largest broad of Limfjord, and that its eastern coast, which is like a small copy of the eastern coast of Jutland, looks across towards Fur and Livø, great beasts that lie sleeping on the sea. Fur, like a cachalot, with the steep head, which the sailors call Canute's Head, beetling towards the north. Perhaps it was in this broad that our first Canutes, the Great and the Holy, collected their fleets before they stood out westward for England. But there is no cachalot, not even the immortal white whale Moby Dick himself, that could arch its back so mightily towards the sun and the show-

ers. One must go further back to find so palæolithic a vastness of outline. No, Fur is one of the great undying sea monsters that once stranded in these narrow waters and was anchored here for ever while long winters and brief summers came and went and its humped back was overgrown with heath and broom.

On Livø there was in my childhood an oak wood with fallow deer in it, and a pair of eagles nested on the island. On landing, after a viking cruise in the ferryman's yawl across the broad, we found skeletons of sheep. Now the State has taken it and given it to the idiots of the upper classes, and the eagles hover no more above the defiant yellow slopes, or above Livtap and the long reef where the waves break, and which points down towards Hvalpsund and the land of the Cimbri.

These coasts, seen, for example, from up on the Legind hills, are of a remarkable firmness of line. One feels, if one has been born here, that they have been drawn once for all with an elemental simplicity. Ingres, or, for the matter of that, Picasso, might have drawn these clean and frozen lines.

From "Chamberlain's Hill" you look out over a great part of Mors and Salling, old bodies lying unprotected and naked under the lash of the west wind.

MORS

But down at Højriis there grows a little beech wood, the only one in Thisted County, as the Manor is the only "castle" and its owner the only nobleman in this ancient land of peasants.

That wood was our childhood's Eden.

Højriis rhymes with "paradise," and for thousands of Mors island boys they were synonyms. It is irrevocably lost, but for that very reason eternally paradise, "*car les vrais paradis sont les paradis qu'on a perdus.*"

The castle and the garden with the sundial that only told the sunny hours, and the little wood which to us seemed boundless, full of mystery — and of wild raspberries and lilies of the valley.

And there are those today who smell the fjord
And see a wood for the first time on earth.

So sings Johannes V. Jensen in his poem on the Liberty Day festival of the Himmerland children. And to us, if not the first, the second line at least applied. Højriis Wood is the wood of woods, and nothing can detract from or diminish its vastness and loveliness; not even the years of youth in Sumatra's jungles and primeval forests can take away its glamour and its glory. And what are the forests of Fontainebleau and Compiègne, or the mountain woods of Germany or the grey olive and

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pine woods of Provence, or Norway's spruce or Sweden's birches? Yes, even the five-thousand-year-old sequoias in California — they are dwarfs to the old beeches in Højriis Wood. For that wood not only grew green and dusky somewhere between the heathland and the fjord, but it stands for all eternity high and still in childhood's memory country, and it will whisper and cast its shade over our last hour.

Sallingsund runs narrow and harsh between Pinen and Plagen, with long, stubborn coastlines; northward lies Nykøbing, which is not so new as all that, between its two little rivers and its two capes, Ørodde and Refshammer. There the lovers walked among the heather and the young mountain pines, and

But eighteen summers in all was the woman
Whose cheeks by the wind were burnt and bitten,
And salt was the kiss, ay, salt as the breezes
That sang of love on a long, pure note.

One day in June I went by motor-bus — one of these frightful words which our smooth and all too accommodating language accepts as if it were an Austrian war baby — from Nykøbing up to Feggesund; the driver was a Mors islander from Sejerslev, of the purest type. The bus was full of packages and things, twelve pairs of wooden shoes

tied together, a big tin keg of motor oil that was leaking considerably, fish-nets, parts of agricultural machines, big cardboard boxes. There were three or four passengers besides myself, an "educated" and smartly dressed peasant girl, whom I saved at the last moment from sitting down in her embarrassment on the oil keg, and two fine gentlemen who conversed together in the most well-bred and unspeakably friendly manner, although they obviously did not know each other. I was at once suspicious of them, and I saw that the driver, too, regarded them doubtfully.

We drove at a good pace northward past old Nørre Mill as far as Tødsø, but kept stopping every moment, and every time the motor stopped, the song of larks simply filled the earth and sky with its light-hearted jubilation. We stopped, God be praised, for the least thing; for instance, when old men or women came out of farmhouses with packages which the driver was to take charge of; often he had to undertake the packing as well and supply the string and write the address on them. It took time, but his patience and helpfulness were as long as the June day itself, and his good humour unfailing. Once we had just got under way after a very long stop when a little man far behind us shouted: "Hey!" in an astonishingly penetrating

voice. The driver looked back with a long look, but he stopped, and when the little man, out of breath, came up with us, he said:

“ Why do you sing out ‘ Hey ’? Why don’t you sing out ‘ Hi ’? Is it because you ain’t a high fellow yourself? ”

We came up past Alsted’s little towerless church and saw Draaby Cove in front of us, sunny and sleeping, with its little terns that always seem to stay fluttering in one place in the air, staring down at a prey in the shallow water on which they never swoop.

At every side road we stopped, and a parcel, a pair of wooden shoes, or a ploughshare was pitched out on the edge of the ditch. And they talk of Frode Fredegod’s days as something far off and vanished. They prevail to this day in the north district of Mors Island.

At Sejerslev the two gentlemen got off, looked a little surprised at the lack of welcome, but went, suitcase in hand and in their smart black coats, somewhat undecided, almost a little tragic, like small Charlie Chaplins, off along the dusty sun-scorched highroad. When they had gone about a couple of hundred yards the driver suddenly shouted after them: “ Do you two happen to be missionaries? ” When they turned and nodded he

said: "Then you'd better get in again, as I've orders to take you to Hesselbjerg." They got in, but the driver disappeared into a little house and for some time was not in evidence. When a quarter of an hour had passed and I was beginning to fear I should not catch the train to Fjerritslev in Vesløs, and since I presumably showed by certain signs an unbecoming impatience, an old peasant who had hitherto sat silent suddenly said to me:

"He's only gone in to kiss his woman."

And on closer reflection I had to admit to myself that this was far more important. For what did it matter whether I caught the train on the Fjerritslev railway? The question arose for me whether it was not rather a piece of luck, an unexpected deliverance, a last-moment rescue from something that had long been threatening. Why not stay at the ferry inn at Feggesund and eat its eels? Why not spend the night there? Yes, why not stay a week, a month, a year, and study the Hamlet legend in its actual native place? And perhaps, as one grew old and grey, arrive at an understanding of Hamlet's mind and Danish disposition, at an insight into all our tragic but so engaging indecision and opportunism such as I could not find anywhere else in the world.

Is there anything in the round world so devas-

tating as this business of everlastingly catching trains and ships, which indeed has all arisen out of our absurd divisions of time? Can one imagine anything duller and emptier? But what a world of possibilities opens before you when you see the ship on which an evil fate has impelled you to engage a berth safely chugging away in its banal fashion, and its tedious wake wiped out and disappearing!

My God, why did I not stay at Feggesund that June day? By now I should have been on the secure road to renown as a Hamlet expert, the first to make actual studies on the ground. It is strange, almost incredible, that no erudite German has yet settled himself for life by Fegge Cove. The Germans, indeed, are not afraid of devoting their lives to truth and its elucidation. A pity that they so often see only a tiny, a vanishing segment.

But the driver came out at last, and, by God, he was wiping his mouth! The peasant looked at me, but neither of us said anything. I was in no doubt. The woman did not appear — and that was well — for one has learned that the fairest women are those one never sees; and now one can dream for ever of the rare pearl he hid in the little house at Sejerslev — that good Mors islander.

At Hesselbjerg we were rid of the missionaries,

and the peasant also got off. I went on alone to Feggesund and sought in vain for the moor where the Amled of Saxo Grammaticus, more fortunate than Shakspeare's, took his Ophelia on a bridal bed of coltsfoot, ragged robin, and rushes; but Saxo says, too, that he carried her far afield, most likely as far as Ejerslev Moss. All this legend is anyhow so thoroughly Jutish that there is not a trace of reason to suppose that it was not native to Fegge Down.

I parted from my driver at the ferry. There was not a living soul in sight, and the air trembled with sun and desolation; there is no lonelier spot in the jungles of Siam. The ferryman was having his afternoon nap, but did not take it in ill part when I woke him. He ferried me across in a big motor-boat for twenty-five öre, and we became friends on the way because we did not disturb each other's thoughts with superfluous sound; we exchanged, in fact, not one word, but we were at one, we met mystically in the perfect stillness of the summer day in the stone-age desolation that held sway over these deserted coasts. The fjord lay as in a trance, as in a sun narcosis, up past Fegge Reef and along the coast of Han County. If I had had the patience which is necessary to him who would observe nature's secret play, I would perhaps have

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seen the sea serpent raise his grey and shapeless head above the islets or seen the ichthyosaurus emerge and roll delicately on the surface, exhibiting his inconceivable, unfinished forms like scattered scraps of chaos itself, sketches and rough draughts for the abundance that was to come and people the elements.

For it is the inmost charm of such a day in such a place that one is outside time, and all things are possible.

At Thysiden another motor-bus awaited me. It was historic, but is not to find its chronicler here. The chassis was one of the earliest numbers to issue from the Ford factories — number two, I fancy, or three. Number one, as we know, is to be found in the gigantic and unbelievably interesting Henry Ford Museum at Detroit. The coach-work was really original; from the inscriptions which still here and there had defied the west wind and the climate of Thy it clearly appeared that its planks had originally done duty in a fish-tank — and presumably they often still enclose rare and astonishing fish.

But on that day I was the only one in the fish-tank, and gasping I stood in time on the Vesløs station platform just as the train — a motor coach

— came in. Nor was there any other passenger in sight; besides me there were, however, about five hundred planks and a live cow going by the train. It must have taken some time to get them in; the station-master and the conductor of the train, both in neat uniforms, together carried out this work. But I was still outside time and watched them as from a star, and besides, what was Fjerritslev to me? I was prepared for anything that day, no matter what, in the profoundest sense *ad utrumque paratus*.

There I was in the midst of summer Denmark and was no more than taking possession of my heritage. It came home to me that day as never before that I had been born joint owner of a treasure, of inexhaustible riches, the rare and peculiar glory of the Danish June day; yes, more than peculiar; in no place in the world does one find its equal. And rare it is, alas, too, even in its native land, Jutland, the Islands, and Skaane. Yes, in Skaane, for no war and no treaty of peace can wipe out the unity that is created by June's bright days and nights; and when once the ancient Danish realm, united and free, enters into a greater North, then we will bring as our best gift that summer land which is our heritage, which we first see

clearly in its incomparable charm when we have long lacked it, when we have been near forgetting it and losing it entirely.

In other lands they have rocks for soil and the roar of the surf for the play of the waves in our fjords that sounds like a million kisses. They have another sky and other woods, their grass is of another greenness, their larks sing on another note, and the cuckoo's call does not wake the same peculiar and melancholy echo in the heart as with us. Where in the world does the land unfold itself so placidly, so confidently ; where does it swell in such sweet and comfortable lines?

Like a goddess of fertility with a thousand breasts Denmark in the summer lies outstretched, and there is still a place for all her children. She offers still "a meadow for the midday rest" to him who will listen to the sweet concert of the larks and the bees and the summer wind ; and it does not remind him of jazz, it is not "hot," but there is coolness and healing in it. And in the ears of a Dane from the tropics it sounds, while his eye follows white clouds sailing high, as if he heard murmuring the very springs of health and equilibrium — he has found his way to the centre of his being — he feels that he is at home.

APPENDIX

It has been suggested that my two sketches of the Dutch colonial war in Acheh call for a few explanatory remarks. It is a question of an episode in which white men, civilized officers, by torture compel native prisoners to betray their fellow-countrymen and in which afterwards these defenceless prisoners are killed in cold blood.

Let me begin by observing that both the persons and the place of this episode are fictitious, but it is none the less typical of the colonial war at that time, 1905-6. The Dutch had been carrying on since 1872 a war forced upon them by the Sultanate of Acheh on the northern extremity of Sumatra, a war which was waged with very varying fortune. The first expedition that was sent up there was repulsed with heavy loss and had to re-

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embark. In the beginning of the nineties the greater part of the country was conquered and there were Dutch garrisons in all the large villages. Then in 1896 came the great "treason" when Tuku Oemar, one of the most influential chiefs, who for years had been a "loyal friend," took up arms, and a large part of the people joined him. In the course of a very short time the Dutch had only the capital and a few scattered forts left, and in these they were actually besieged. The war had to be waged all over again. Under an eminent commander, General — afterwards Governor — Van Heutz, the Dutch forces in the course of a few years reconquered the whole country, established numerous small forts and fortified camps, and gradually brought the greater part of it under a firm and orderly government, in which the civil offices, too, were filled by military officers. The country was conquered, all resistance on the grand scale was crushed, but it was far from being pacified.

From 1900 till about 1911-12 the Achehs carried on, under able leaders, the embittered and bloody guerrilla war from which the episodes here described are derived, a war which compelled the Dutch forces to exert all their powers and indeed necessitated an entirely new organization. It was

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soon found impossible to carry on such a war in tropical mountain country with European soldiers, who could never compete with the enemy in mobility and hardihood — the two most important qualities in a guerrilla war of this kind.

No quarter was given on the Acheh side, nor could the small Dutch columns of from twenty to a hundred men, operating without transport many days' march from their base, burden themselves with many prisoners. It was often difficult enough for them to deal with and bring in their own wounded, and accordingly those of the enemy not seldom suffered. A war of this kind, waged by ambushes, surprise attacks, and stealthy assassination, in which every man, woman, and even child is an enemy, with its endless marches only rarely crowned with success in the immense trackless country, led in the course of the years to a state of chronic nervous tension which in many, both officers and men, developed into a pathological condition.

One must not suppose that the sacrifices which the war involved fell principally on the side of the Achehs. The Dutch army's losses in killed, wounded, and dead of disease amounted by 1910 to upwards of a hundred thousand, of whom over a thousand were officers.

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In the years in which I took part in the war (1905-8) the last violent outburst of resistance took place, and the mutual hatred and embitterment had reached their zenith. No end to the horrible situation seemed to be in sight. A dull hopelessness, or the grim humour of desperation, was typical of the frame of mind of many of the officers. I have heard Dutch officers' wives, refined and cultured women, express their views as to the manner in which captured Aceh leaders of revolt should be treated, in terms which are unprintable.

But, despite all this, I wish as clearly as possible to assert that no guerrilla war of many years' duration has perhaps ever been carried on with so consistent a humanity as the Dutch army displayed in these long, bloody, enervating years. The cruelties which took place, and they were not few, were inevitable, necessary, arising out of the very nature of the war. In those years I neither saw nor heard of instances of actual sadism, however great the temptation was; and the very incident that forms the foundation of the sketch "Rattan" led, in fact, to a protracted and serious court martial on the officers responsible, which ended in their acquittal by the General Court Martial of Batavia. They had acted in accordance with the unwritten law of military necessity.

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We need not go back to the Indian wars in North America or to the Spanish guerrilla warfare against the army of Napoleon to find examples by the hundred of systematic, fantastic, diabolical cruelty. They are to be found in abundance much nearer to us in time and place. We need only read accounts of the "Black and Tan" period in the Irish war of liberation only ten short years ago. What was perpetrated by Irish and English, most and worst perhaps by Irish against Irish, reduces all that happened in Aceh of this kind to a harmless diversion, mere child's play.

One has, after all, no more excuse for pretending ignorance about what human nature is capable of when it is put face to face with the hard necessity of war. Even if one hates and despises all cruelty, the clear-sighted Duke's phrase still holds good, that we can always endure the sufferings that fall upon our neighbours. The notion of so-called "humane" warfare is surely now recognized as one of the many fair illusions from the heyday of the liberal-radical period. Now we know better, that we are all in the same boat, men, women, and children. Our vaunted universal progress moves, in this as in other respects, in a curve which seems suspiciously to lead back to the Thirty Years' War or the time of the Mongols.



This book is composed in Linotype “ Scotch ”. This style of type came into fashion in England and the United States by way of fonts cast at the foundry of Alex. Wilson & Son at Glasgow in 1833. It was a style of letter that echoed the “ classical ” taste of the time, and would seem to have been inspired by the kind of letter-shapes that result when you cut lettering on a copper plate with a graver — just as visiting-cards are cut now. It is more precise and *vertical* in character than the “ old style ” types (such as Caslon) that it displaced.

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